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وزارة الشؤون الإسلامية والأوقاف والدعوة والإرشاد
مجمع الملك فهد لطباعة المصحف الشريف
بالتعاون مع
الجامعة الإسلامية في المدينة المنورة

SÎRAT AL-NABÎ ﷺ AND THE ORIENTALISTS

WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE WRITINGS OF WILLIAM MUIR, D. S. MARGOLIOUTH AND W. MONTGOMERY WATT

Vol. I A
From the background to the beginning of the Prophet's Mission

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KING FAHD COMPLEX
FOR THE PRINTING OF THE HOLY QUR'AN
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صدر هذا الكتاب بالتعاون بين :

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بالمدينة المنورة

ومركز خدمة السنة والسيرة النبوية
بالمدينة المنورة

الطبعة الأولى
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بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

مقدمة

الحمد لله رب العالمين ، والصلاة والسلام على أشرف الأنبياء والمرسلين ، نبينا محمد وعلى آله وصحبه أجمعين. أما بعد :

فيسرني أن أقدم للقراء الكرام هذا المؤلف الجديد في السيرة " سيرة النبي ﷺ والمستشرقون " (العهد المكي) للدكتور محمد مهر علي الذي يصدره مجمع الملك فهد لطباعة المصحف الشريف بالتعاون مع مركز خدمة السنة والسيرة النبوية بالمدينة المنورة .

لقد درس المستشرقون - ولا يزالون يدرسون - السيرة النبوية للنيل من سيرة النبيّ ﷺ المطهرة والطعن في شخصيته. وأساليبهم تتنوع، فأسلوب الهجوم السافر والسب والشتم الذي كان سائداً في القرن الثامن عشر الميلادي حلّ محله الآن أسلوب التعاطف في الظاهر.

لقد حلل المؤلف في هذه الدراسة مؤلفات ثلاثة من مشاهير المستشرقين، وهم: وليم ميور، و د.س. مرغوليوث، ومونتغمري واط، وفنّد مزاعمهم بالنسبة إلى السيرة المطهرة بدقة علمية تقتضيها معالجة مثل هذا الموضوع.

أسأل الله تعالى أن ينفع به، ويجزي خادم الحرمين الشريفين خير الجزاء لجهوده المتواصلة في خدمة كتاب الله العزيز وسنة رسوله ﷺ المطهرة وسيرته الطيبة.

الدكتور/ عبدالله بن عبدالمحسن التركي

وزير الشئون الإسلامية والأوقاف والدعوة والإرشاد

والمشرف العام على مجمع الملك فهد لطباعة المصحف الشريف

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

FOREWORD

Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds, and peace and blessings of Allah be upon the Noblest of the Prophets and Messengers, our Prophet Muhammad, and upon his household and his companions.

I have great pleasure in presenting to the readers this new book on sîrah, Sîrat al-Nabî ﷺ and the Orientalists (Makkan Period) by Dr M.M.Ali which has been published by King Fahd Complex for the Printing of the Holy Qur'an, Madinah in collaboration with the Centre for the Service of Sunnah and Sîrah, Madinah.

The orientalists have been studying the sîrah with a view to casting aspersion on the life of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and discrediting his personality. Their approach has differed from time to time. Open attack and vituperation in the eighteenth century have now given way to a seemingly sympathetic approach to his life.

In this study the author has critically analysed the works of three famous orientalists, William Muir, D.S.Margoliouth and W. Montgomery Watt, and has successfully refuted the charges levelled by them against the life and character of the Prophet ﷺ with an erudition which the treatment of such a subject requires.

May Allah make this book useful, and grant the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques ample reward for his ceaseless service to the Qur'an, the Sunnah and the Sîrah.

Dr Abdullah ibn Abd al-Muhsin al-Turki
Minister for Islamic Affairs, Endowments, Da'wah and Guidance & Supervisor General of King Fahd Complex for the Printing of the Holy Qur'an

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بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

الحمد لله رب العالمين والصلاة والسلام على رسوله سيدنا ونبينا محمد وآله أجمعين وبعد .

PREFACE

The *Sîrah* and Orientalism is no new subject. In the past as well as in modern times scholars have dealt with it from time to time. Of late some serious studies have appeared on the methods and approaches of the orientalists with regard to Islamic themes in general and the *Sîrah* in particular.[1] Some independent works have also appeared, particularly in Arabic, specifically on the subject of the *Sîrah* and the orientalists. Valuable and useful as these works are, there still remains a good deal to be done in analyzing and evaluating the main orientalist works on the *Sîrah*. Especially it is necessary to take into account the whole range of arguments and evidences on which the views and conclusions of individual scholars are based. The present work is an effort in that direction.

It needs hardly any emphasizing that the views of any individual scholar on any particular subject are scarcely all his own. He necessarily reflects the pattern of knowledge existing in his time and draws and builds upon the results of the researches of his predecessors. To study the work of any individual scholar thus necessarily involves referring to the works of his predecessors. It has therefore been thought more useful to take for study a couple or more of scholars, not contemporary with one another, but whose works cover a certain period of time. On this consideration I have selected for the present study the works of William Muir (1819-1905), D.S. Margoliouth (1858-1940) and W. Montgomery Watt (1909—). The works of these scholars span the period from the mid-nineteenth century to the present day. William Muir's work, *The Life of Mahomet*, appeared for the first time in 1858, while the latest of Watt's works on the subject, *Muḥammad's Mecca*, appeared as late as 1988.

It must be emphasized at the outset that the present study takes into consideration the principal works of the above mentioned scholars on the *Sîrah*, not all their works on all the subjects they have dealt with. Similarly it needs

1. See for instance *Manâhij al Mustashriqîn Fî al-Dirâsât al-'Arabiyyah wa al-Islâmiyyah*, Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf Staes, 2 Parts, Riyadh, 1985.

to be noted that though the present study is concerned mainly with the works of these scholars on *Sîrah*, the works of other scholars have also been sometimes taken into consideration in order to trace the evolution of certain points of view.

The mid-nineteenth century proved a turning point in the orientalists' approach to the *Sîrah*. The new era may be said to have begun on Friday, March 8, 1840, when Thomas Carlyle started delivering his Second Lecture on Heroes and Hero worship. In sharp contrast with the spirit of sheer vituperation which characterized Voltaire's deliverences a century earlier (*Mahomet*, 1742), Carlyle called attention, among other things, to the *sincerity* of the Prophet. Carlyle's hint was taken up by his contemporary and subsequent writers in general. They henceforth stressed the sincerity of Muḥammad (ﷺ) not really to recognize his Prophethood but to suggest, by one device or another, that though he sincerely believed himself to be a Prophet and the recipient of Allah's revelations, he was nonetheless mistaken in that belief, that the whole process was a psychological phenomenon and that the "revelations" he gave out were the result of that psychological process or of his intuition. Thus was Muḥammad (ﷺ) gradually transferred, in the domain of European thinking, from the status of a conscious false Prophet or imposter to that of an unconscious false Prophet or, at best, to that of the victim of an innocent delusion.

Secondly, the mid-nineteenth century witnessed a new phase of intense Christian missionary activities among Muslims under European imperial domination. The exigencies of imperial administration had brought the Europeans into closer contact with the subject Muslim population. This closer contact together with the evangelizing intentions of the time suggested the abandonment of the previous policy of mere vilification of the Prophet and the adoption of at least an apparently logical and persuasive approach to the Prophet of Islam. Carlyle's suggestion thus fell in line with the need of the times.

William Muir's work appeared in the context of the European imperial interest on the one hand and the Christianizing intentions on the other. He was a high official in the English East India Comapny's administration in India. In his private capacity he helped and sympathized with the work of the Christian missionaries in India. Especially he was in close personal touch with the well-known Christian missionary, Carl Gottaleb Pfander, who was then engaged in missionary activities among the Muslims of northern India.

In fact Muir was one of the umpires from the Christian side at the famous Agra debate of 1854 between Pfander and Raḥmat Allah Kêrânawî. The debate evidently turned against Pfander who was transferred by his missionary society (the Church Missionary Society) first to Peshawar and then to Constantinople.[1] As Muir mentions in the preface to the first edition of his work, he undertook its preparation "at the instance" of Pfander. The first edition of the work in four volumes was published between 1858 and 1861. A second edition, excluding the sections on the sources and pre-Islamic Arabia, was published in the early seventies of the century. A third edition of it was published in 1894. A revised version of this third edition, with the inclusion of the section on the sources was published in 1923. Recently, in 1988, the original first edition has been reprinted.

Margoliouth's work appeared at the beginning of the twentieth century. The third and revised edition of his work, under the title *Mohammed and the Rise of Islam,* was published in 1905. This edition has recently been republished in 1985. Naturally, his work falls in the mid-point of the period under review. Besides taking into consideration the views and opinions advanced by his predecessors since the publication of Muir's work, Margoliouth reflected the state of the orientalists' thinking about the Prophet at the beginning of the twentieth century. He also advanced some new conclusions and opinions of his own that were adopted and re-stated by his successors, including Watt.

W. Montgomery Watt is acknowledgedly a leading European authority on Islam and the Prophet at the present time. *His Muhammad at Mecca* was first published in 1953, followed quickly by his second work, *Muhammad at Medina*, which was published in 1956. These two works have since been republished a number of times. They have also been translated in a number of European languages and also in Arabic. He has also other works relating to the subject. As already mentioned, his latest work on the Prophet, *Muḥammad's Mecca*, was published in 1988.

It is thus obvious that an analysis and evaluation of the works of these scholars would give us an idea of the state of the orientalists' approach to the *Sîrah* in the middle of the nineteenth century, at the beginning of the twenti-

1. See for details M.M.Ali, *History of the Muslims of Bengal*, Vol.II, Imam Muḥammad ibn Saud Islamic University, Riyadh, 1988, pp. 227-233. Raḥmat Allah subsequently wrote his famous work, *Iẓhâr al-Ḥaqq*, on the basis of that debate.

eth century and during its later part, as well as of the evolution of their ideas and opinions since the mid-nineteenth century till the present time.

The present volume is devoted to the Makkan period of the Prophet's life. It will be observed from the table of contents that I have divided this period into seven sections according to the main events and developments. At the beginning of each section I have described in one or more chapters these events and developments. These chapters are not intended to be an exhaustive account of the *Sîrah*. They are designed mainly to enable the general reader the better to understand the discussions that follow on the views and opinions of the orientalists concerning those topics. In discussing their views I have attempted to summarize their arguments and reasons as faithfully as possible and to meet them on their own grounds.

* * *

I am grateful to the authorities of the King Fahd Qur'ân Printing Complex, particularly to its Supervisor-General, His Excellency Dr. 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abd al-Muḥsin al-Turkî, and its Secretary-General, Dr. Muḥammad Sâlim ibn Shudayyid al-'Awfî, for having undertaken the publication of this work. I am also grateful to the authorities of the Islamic University, Madina Munawwara, particularly its President, Dr. 'Abd Allah ibn Ṣâliḥ al-'Ubayd, for having sponsored the project of the present work. My thanks are due also to the Director of the Centre for the Service of *Sunnah* and *Sîrah*, Dr. Marzûq ibn Hayyâs al-Zahrânî, for his constant help and encouragement in accomplishing the project. I am thankful also to all my colleagues at the Centre, specially to my two colleagues in its *Sîrah* department, Shaykh Ṣafîy al-Raḥmân Mubârakpûrî and Shaykh Aḥmad 'Abd Allah Bâjûr, for their help in checking up references; and and to Dr. V. 'Abd al-Raḥîm of the Faculty of Arabic Language, for encouragement and help in various ways. My thanks are due also to Ma'rûf and Manṣûr for help in preparing the final script of the work and in checking the proofs; and to my wife, Razia, for constant encouragement and help in all possible ways.

In preparing this work I had to work in the Central Library of the Islamic University, Madina, the Library of its Higher Studies Department, the Library of the Centre for the Service of *Sunnah* and *Sîrah*, the Library of the Prophet's Mosque, the Library of the Oriental Section of the Faculty of Da'wah of the Imam Muḥammad Islamic University, situated at Madina Munawwara, the Library of the School of Oriental and African Studies, Lon-

don and the British Library (British Museum). Everywhere I received the best of attention and the most willing cooperation. My thanks are due to the staff of all these libraries and institutions.

The Prophet's Mosque, M. M. Ali
19 Dhu al-Qa'dah, 1413 H.
(10 May 1993)

CONTENTS

SECTION II
BIRTH, BOYHOOD AND YOUTH

SECTION V

THE EARLY PHASE OF THE MISSION

SECTION VII

THE LATE MAKKAN PHASE AND MIGRATION TO MADINA

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Al-Azraqî	'Abû al-Walîd Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allah ibn Aḥmad al-Azraqî, *Akhbâr Makka wa mâ jâ'a fîhâ min al-'Âthâr*, ed. Rushdî al-Ṣâliḥ Mulḥis, Beirut, 1399 / 1979.
Al-Fâsî	'Abû Ṭayyib Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad, al-Taqî, al-Fâsî, *Al-'Iqd al-Thamîn Fî Târîkh al-Balad al-'Amîn,* 8 Vols., Cairo, 1379-1388 H.
B.S.O.A.S.	*Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, London.
Bukhârî	'Abu 'Abd Allâh Muḥammad ibn Ismâ'îl al-Bukhârî, *Ṣaḥîḥ al-Bukhârî* (The number refers to the number of *ḥadîth* in *Fatḥ al-Bârî*).
Ibn Hishâm	'Abû Muḥammad 'Abd al-Malik ibn Hishâm, *al-Sîrah al-Nabawiyyah* ed. Muḥammad al-Saqqâ and others, 2 Vols., second print, Cairo, 1375 / 1955.
Ibn Sa'd	Muḥammad ibn Sa'd ibn Manî', 'Abû 'Abd Allâh, *Al-Ṭabaqât al-Kubrâ*, 8 Vols., Beirut, 1405 / 1985.
J.R.A.S.	*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, London.
M.W.	*The Moslem World*, Hartford Seminary Foundation, Connecticut, U.S.A.
Muslim	'Abû al-Ḥasan Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjâj, al-Qushayrî, al-Naysabûrî, *Ṣaḥîḥ Muslim*, (The number refers to the number of *ḥadîth* in the edition by Fu'âd A. Bâqî, 5 Vols., Istanbul, n.d.)
Musnad	'Abû 'Abd Allâh Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal ibn Muḥammad, *Musnad al-Imâm Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal wa bihâmishihi Muntakhab Kanz al-'Ummâl*, 6 Vols, old print, n.d.
Suhaylî	'Abû al-Qâsim 'Abd al-Raḥmân ibn 'Abd Allâh ibn 'Abî al-Ḥasan al-Khath'amî, *Al-Rawḍ al-'Unuf Fî Tafsîr al-Sîrah al-Nabawiyyah li ibn Hishâm,* ed. Ṭa-Hâ 'Abd al-Ra'ûf Sa'îd, 4 vols, Beirut, 1398.

T.G.U.O.S	*Transactions of the Glasgow University Oriental Society*, Glasgow.
Ṭayâlisî	Sulaymân ibn Dâud ibn al-Jârûd 'Abî Dâud, *Musnad 'Abî Dâud al-Ṭayâlisî*, Beirut, n.d.
Tirmidhî	'Abû 'Îsâ Muḥammad ibn 'Isâ ibn Sawrah, *Al-Jâmi' al-Ṣaḥîḥ wa huwa Sunan al-Tirmidhî*, ed. Aḥmad Muḥammad Shâkir, 4 vols., Cairo, second print, 1398 / 1987.
Watt, *M. at M.*	W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1988.
Watt, *M.'s M.*	W. Montgomery Watt, *Muḥammad's Mecca*, Edinburgh, 1988.

SECTION I
THE SOURCES AND THE BACKGROUND

CHAPTER I

THE SOURCES OF THE *SÎRAH*

In the main there are three sources of information on the life and activities of Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ). These are the Qur'ân, the *Ḥadîth* (reports / traditions) and the early accounts called the *Sîrah / Maghâzî* literature. The *ḥadîth* compilations and the *sîrah / maghâzî* literature are very much similar in respect of the materials they contain. Basically they both are collections of "reports". Hence some scholars are inclined to classify the two in one and the same category of "reports" or "traditions".[1] There are however, two important distinctions between the two. The *ḥadîth* collections are arranged either according to doctrinal, juridical and legal topics or according to the original transmitters of the reports. The *sîrah* compilations, on the other hand, are arranged more or less chronologically and in accordance with the incidents and events of the Prophet's life. Secondly, in the *ḥadîth* compilations greater attention has been paid to the chains of narrators of each report and to other questions and rules bearing on the authenticity and trustworthiness of the reports. In the *sîrah* literature, on the other hand, the rules regarding *isnâd* have not always been observed, though often the same scholar was involved in both types of work. The *sîrah* literature, however, has one point of advantage in its favour. It alone provides the chronological framework of the Prophet's life-story and it contains information on some aspects of the Prophet's life that is not available in the *ḥadîth* literature properly so called. All the three sources are, however, supplementary and complementary to one another and all of them have to be taken into account in order to have a proper view of the life and activities of the Prophet.

I. THE QUR'ÂN

The Qur'ân is divine in origin. It was revealed to the Prophet in short and long passages over a period of 23 years through the angel Jibrîl.[2] As it was revealed the Prophet committed each and every passage to memory. The Qur'ân itself bears testimony to the fact that early in his career he at times became so eager to commit the revealed text to memory that he hurriedly

1. Thus A.J. Wensinck, for instance, includes the works of Ibn Hîsham, Al-Wâqidî and Ibn Sa'd in his well-known Index to *ḥadîth* literature.

2. See for a discussion on the nature of Qur'ânic revelation *infra*, Ch.XX, sec.III.

started repeating the words as the angel uttered them.[1] He was divinely asked not to do so and was assured that Allah would enable him to retain in his memory whatever was revealed to him. Many of his companions also memorized the sacred texts. They had the immediate need to do so because they had to recite the passages in the prayer which was made incumbent on them from the very beginning of Islam. In the course of time the Prophet as well as many of his ardent followers had the entire Qur'ân committed to memory. In Arabia in those days, as also in many other places in the world, it was the practice to memorize whole texts and literary works, genealogies and traditions, and to transmit them orally to subsequent generations; and the Arabs were specially gifted with the skill of memorization. At intervals, particularly in the month of Ramaḍân, the Prophet recited the whole Qur'ân, as far as it was revealed, to the angel Jibrîl; and it is on record that during the last Ramadân of his life he recited the entire Qur'ân twice before that angel.[2] It was also during his life-time that he arranged the passages of the Qur'ân into *sûrahs* and sections in their present form, according to divine guidance received through Jibrîl.

Not that the Qur'ân was committed only to memory. The Prophet took early care to have the passages of the Qur'ân written on suitable and available materials like tree-leaves, bark, hides, bones, stones and such other objects. Indeed the impetus to have the texts written down was given in the very first revelation which emphasized, among other things, the acquisition and preservation of knowledge by means of the pen.[3] Also, since the main justification for the new revelation was that the earlier revealed books had been corrupted and altered by their followers, it was only natural that the Prophet should have been doubly careful to take appropriate steps to guard against such an eventuality in the case of the new revelation. Indeed the Qur'ân itself points to this fact and declares its absolute integrity and immunity from external interference and interpolation-"it is indeed a Book of stupendous authority. No falsity can approach it from its front, nor from its rear (i.e., neither directly nor indirectly).[4] Thus the Qur'ân was preserved in memory as well as in writing.

1. Q. 75:16-18.
2. *Bukhâri*, nos., 1902, 4997, 4998.
3. Q. 96:4-5.
4. Q. 41:41-42. = ﴿ ... وإنه لكتـب عزيز * لا يأتيه البـطل من بين يديه ولا من خلفه ... ﴾

The process of writing down the texts started early enough, almost simultaneously with the beginning of the revelation. The Prophet employed a number of his followers as copyists of the Qur'ânic texts.[1] Written records of the revealed texts were kept with the Prophet as also with many of his followers. The story of Fâṭimah bint al-Khaṭṭâb's having concealed a written tablet of the Qur'ânic text at the approach of her enraged brother, 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭâb (r.a.) to her house and then of her having shown it to him when he calmed down is well-known to any student of Islamic history. This happened about the sixth year of the Prophet's mission. As the days rolled on such written records multiplied along with the accumulation of the revelations. After the Prophet's migration to Madina four of the *anṣâr* were particularly engaged in collecting the Qur'ân and keeping it with them.[2] The text of the entire Qur'ân written on various objects and kept in a container remained with the Prophet as well. Such written records of more or less the entire Qur'ân lay with a number of his followers also.

Almost immediately after the Prophet's death a number of Arab tribes made an attempt to renounce Islam and to secede from the authority of Madina. In the wars that followed — the *riddah* war — many *ḥuffâẓ* (memorizers of the entire Qur'ân) died. Hence the question of preserving the Qur'ân freshly attracted the attention of those in authority. At 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭâb's suggestion the first Khalîfah 'Abû Bakr (r.a.) took steps to have the written records of the Qur'ânic texts arranged in the order of the *sûrahs* and sections as taught by the Prophet and as learnt by the *ḥuffâẓ*. The task was entrusted to Zayd ibn Thâbit (r.a) who had been a scribe under the Prophet. He compared the written texts with the recitation of the *ḥuffâẓ* and thus prepared a master-copy of the Qur'ân. This was kept with 'Abû Bakr during his life-time, then with 'Umar and, after his death, with his daughter *'Umm al-Mu'minîn* Ḥafṣah (r.a.).[3] During the *Khilâfah* of 'Uthmân (r.a.), 24-35 H., a tendency towards variant readings of the Qur'ân was detected in the far-flung provinces. Hence he took immediate steps to make copies of the Qur'ân from the master-copy in Ḥafṣah's keeping and to send them to the various provinces, withdrawing and suppressing any variation in the reading

1. See M. Muṣṭafâ al-A'ẓamî, *Kuttâb al-Nabî Ṣallallâhu 'alayhi wa sallama*, Beirut, 1394.

2. *Bukhârî*, nos. 3810, 3996, 5003, 5004; *Muslim*, no. 2465; *Musnad*, III, 233, 277; *Ṭayâlisî*, No. 2018.

3. *Bukhârî*, Nos. 4986, 4989, 7191.

found to exist anywhere. His role was thus simply that of a publisher of the master-copy of the Qur'ân, not that of its "collector", far less that of a "compiler". Since then the same Qur'ân has been in circulation in writing as it has been also preserved and transmitted from generation to generation through memorization of its entire text. The practice of memorization continues still today in spite of the tremendous progress in the art of printing and in photo-mechanical and electronic reproduction and retrieval systems. Indeed the act of memorizing the Qur'ân and of "learning" it and teaching it has been assigned great religious merit by the Prophet so that even today Muslims can count among their ranks millions of *ḥuffâẓ* of the entire Qur'ân, whereas it is hard to find among the votaries of other religious systems even a single individual who can recite from memory even a single chapter from his sacred text. Also, since the Prophet's time it has been the continual practice of Muslims of all climes to complete the recitation of the whole Qur'ân through the month-long special nightly *tarâwîḥ* prayer during Ramaḍân. No other people on earth have shown so much avidity and taken so meticulous a care to preserve the purity of their sacred texts as the Muslims have done.

The Qur'ân is thus the most authentic and absolutely contemporary record relating to the Prophet. Anyone desiring to understand the *sîrah* must constantly refer to it.[1] It must not be supposed, however, that it is a book of history, far less an autobiography. Indeed it is unique in nature and is unlike any other book in respect of diction, style of expression, arrangement of its chapters and sections and the manner of its treatment of the topics and themes it deals with. Its most appropriate description is that which it gives to itself, namely, "guidance for the God-fearing".[2] Nevertheless it contains information on the life and activities of the Prophet in many ways. In the first place, it represents the corpus of the teachings and messages he delivered to mankind, the reforms and reconstruction in man's belief, thought, life and conduct made under Allah's instructions. In other words, it is the best reflex of his role as Prophet and Messenger of Allah. Secondly, it contains very clear references to specific events and incidents of his life, both pulic and private, to the manners of his receipt of Allah's revelations, his role as preacher, warner and conveyer of good tidings for the believers in

1. See on this point Shaykh Muḥammad 'Alî al-Ḥarkân, *Al-Sîrah al-Nabawiyyah fi al-Qur'ân al-Karîm*, in *Al-Buḥûth wa al-Dirâsât al-muqaddamah li al-Mu'tamar al-'Alamî al-Thâlith li al-Sîrah al-Nabawiyyah*, Doha, Muḥarram, 1404 H., Pt. III, pp. 7-130.

2. Q. 2:2. ﴿هدى للمتقين﴾

this world and in the hereafter, to the opposition of the unbelievers, the objections they raised, the absurd demands they made of the Prophet, the replies that were given to their objections and demands, the persecution they inflicted on the believers, the conspiracies they hatched against the Prophet, the attempts they made to kill him, the straitened situation which led the Muslims and the Prophet to migrate from Makka, the wars they had to fight against the unbelievers like those at Badr, 'Uḥud and Khandaq, the divine help through all these struggles and wars, the treaty made with the Makkans and their ultimate surrender to the Prophet and to the completion of the task given him by allah. Not only these. There are references also to his personal life prior to his call to Prophethood, to his orphanhood, his earlier poverty and subsequent affluence, his relationship with his wives, the calumny directed against one of his wives and even to his temporary inattention to an humble enquirer. In short, there is no aspect of the Prophet's life and mission which is not alluded to in the Qur'ân excepting the mention of the specific dates of the events and incidents. In fact, each passage or part of the passage of the Qur'ân was revealed on specific occasions and incidents of his life. Thirdly, the Qur'ân also alludes to past peoples and civilizations, to the previous Prophets and their struggles, the attitudes of the former unbelieving peoples and their fates, to past events like Abrahah's invasion of Makka for the purpose of destroying the Ka'ba and its fate, to contemporary events like the war between the Roman and the Persian empires and to the prevailing beliefs, customs and superstitions of the Arab people. All these provide the necessary background information on the Prophet's life and mission.

A remarkable distinction of the Qur'ân as a historical record is that unlike other records of a contemporary or near-contemporary nature, and unlike autobiographies, it was not withheld from public view for any length of time for reasons of "policy", "state secrets" and "national" or "personal" interests. On the contrary, it was meant for immediate publication and communication to the people, and was in fact so published and communicated. This fact is very important in two main respects. In the first place, it militates against the suggestion made by the critics of Islam and of the Prophet that he "revised", modified or "altered" the text of the Qur'ân with the progress of his mission and as he advanced in knowledge and experience. For, if he did modify or alter the texts from time to time or in any noticeable manner, even his followers, not to speak of his opponents, would have found fault with him and would almost certainly have deserted him. Secondly, if the Qur'ân stated

anything running counter to the known facts of his life and character, his credit would have been irretrievably compromised and his mission would have ended in failure, as his enemies, the unbelieving Quraysh leaders, were ever ready to discredit him in all possible ways. Hence, when the Qur'ân states, for instance, that prior to his receipt of the revelation he did not entertain any aspiration nor made any preparation for playing the part of a Prophet, or that he did not read any book and was an "unlettered" person, that information is to be accepted as absolutely correct. For, otherwise he would have been instantly contradicted and held up to ridicule and discredit by his own people who knew him intimately since his boyhood. Hence, besides the divine origin of the Qur'ân, this absolute contemporaneity itself invests it with a peculiar authenticity. Therefore any information and glimpses of the Prophet's life and activities contained in the Qur'ân must have an unquestioned precedence over all the other sources of information.

The Qur'ân, however, does not elaborate any event, nor does it give the details of the Prophet's life and activities. For these as also for the chronology we have to turn to *hadîth*, also termed *sunnah*.

II. *ḤÂDÎTH*

The term *ḥadîth* is applied to the reports of the Prophet's sayings and doings, his practices and his explicit or implicit approval of the words or deeds of anyone else. It applies also to the reports of the statements, acts and approvals of his Companions and their immediate successors. As such these reports are of prime historical importance, being the statements and accounts given by eye-witnesses and participants in the events. Often these reports are so vivid and detailed that there should be no question as to their authenticity. When, for instance, Waḥshî gives his own account of how he killed Ḥamzah ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib (r.a.) in the battle of 'Uḥud and how, as an atonement for that deed he, after his embracing of Islam, killed Musaylamah al-Kadhdhâb in the battle of Yamâmah,[1] or when Surâqah ibn Mâlik ibn Ju'shum gives his own account of how, being lured by the Quraysh's declaration of a prize of one hundred camels on the head of the Prophet, he went in pursuit of the latter, being well equipped with his lance and arrows and riding on his swift horse, and how he was miraculously incapacitated to doing any harm to the Prophet and was thus obliged to come back unsuc-

1. *Bukhârî*, no. 4072.

cessful in his purpose,[1] there is no reason to doubt those accounts.

The Qur'ân clearly asks the Prophet to explain and elucidate its meaning and teachings to the people;[2] and he did so throughout his Prophetic life. In this task also he depended on divine guidance and instructions and did not speak anything out of his whim or imagination. His followers noted his utterances with all attention and remembered them carefully. Many of them were in the habit of writing down his statements and utterances,[3] so much so that once he had to interfere and ask them not to write down all his statements and utterances lest those should be mixed up with the texts of the Qur'ân.[4] Incidentally, this very report shows, besides the Companions' practice of writing down the Prophet's statements, that not only was each passage of the Qur'ân written down as soon as it was revealed, but also that the Prophet took care to see that nothing extraneous was mingled up with the sacred text, not even his own explanations.

After the Prophet's death his Companions and followers became all the more careful to remember and act upon his statements and directives. Many of them kept written notes of such statements and utterances of the Prophet. At any rate, since the middle of the first century H. we have specific references to the systematic collection and writing down of *ḥadîth* by a number of Companions and *Tâbi'ûn* (the generation immediately succeeding the Companions).[5] Thus we know for certain that 'Abân ibn 'Uthmân ibn 'Affân (born between 15 and 20 H.) collected and trasmitted some reports relating to *Maghâzî* and taught *fiqh* and adjudication based on *ḥadîth* to a number of persons including 'Abû Bakr ibn Ḥazm.[6] During the same period a junior contemporary of 'Abân ibn 'Uthmân, namely, 'Urwah ibn al-Zubayr (born 26 H.), gained fame as a *muḥaddith* and *faqîh*. "His relationship alone",[7] as J. Horovitz points out, "placed him in the position to obtain

1. *Ibid.*, no. 3906.
2. Q. 16:44. = ﴿ ... وأنزلنا إليك الذكر لتبيّن للناس ما نُزّل إليهم ولعلهم يتفكرون ﴾
3. See for instance *Bukhârî*, no. 111-113; *Musnad*, II, 192, 207, 215, 403.
4. *Muslim*, No. 3004.
5. See for details M.M. A'ẓamî, *Studies in Early Ḥadîth Literature*, Indianapolis, 1978 and Muhammad Zubayr Siddiqi, *Hadith Literature: Its Origin, Development, Special Features and Criticism*, Calcutta University, 1961. (revised edition published by the Islamic texts society, Combridge, 1993.
6. Ibn Sa'd, V, 151; Al-Dhahabî, *Siyar*, IV, 351-53.
7. 'Urwah's mother 'Asmâ' was 'Â'ishah's elder sister.

numerous accounts concerning the early days of Islam at first hand; from his father, from his mother, and above all from his aunt, 'Âisha whom he was never tired of visiting and questioning."[1] A large number of reports of 'Urwah have indeed come down to us, especially through his son Hishâm and Ibn Shihâb al-Zuhrî.

There were also others at that time who devoted themselves to the collection and preservation of *ḥadîth*. Particular mention may be made of 'Abû Bakr ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Amr ibn Ḥazm. His grandfather, 'Amr ibn Ḥazm, was appointed governor of Najran by the Prophet and was instructed by him to teach Islam to the people of that region. As indicated above, 'Abû Bakr received his knowledghe of jurisprudence from 'Abân ibn 'Uthmân and, by 86 H., became the Qâḍî of Madina when 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azîz was its governor. 'Abû Bakr continued in that post for long and was made governor of Madina in addition to its judgeship in 96 H. Besides being himself a great *muḥaddith*, he trained and encouraged his son 'Abd Allah to specialize in collecting and preserving *ḥadîth*.

Thus by the last quarter of the first century H. the collection, preservation and study of *ḥadîth* had been well under way. So far, however, the work was done mostly on the initiative of individual scholars and experts. Even then, the scale of individual efforts in the matter was indeed very wide. It is reported about Ibn Shihâb al-Zuhrî (51-124 H.) that he made a huge number of compilations of *ḥadîth* and these were kept in the state store. On the death of Khalîfah Al-Walîd in 96 H. these were carried away from there on the back of a number of animals.[2]

The first systematic state initiative in the work was taken when 'Umar ibn 'Abd 'Azîz became the *Khalîfah* (99-101). His own learning and interest in the subject, coupled with his experience as governor of Madina and his consequent contact with the *muḥaddithûn* of that city, particularly with its well-known judge (and subsequently governor) 'Abû Bakr ibn Muḥammad, had doubtless a good deal to do with his resolution in this respect. It was this 'Abû Bakr ibn Muḥammad, along with Muḥammad ibn Muslim ibn 'Ubayd Allah ibn Shihâb al-Zuhrî and two other scholars whom he commissioned to make a systematic collection and compilation of *ḥadîth*.[3] These scholars dili-

1. J. Horovitz, in *Islamic Culture*, I, 1927, p. 547.
2. Ibn Sa'd, II, 389.
3. See Ibn Ḥajar, *Fatḥ al-Bârî*, I, 160.

gently carried out their task and by the beginning of the second century H. a considerable collection of *ḥadîth* came into existence.

Basing upon such primary collections and making further investigation and painstaking search the subsequent generations of *muḥaddithûn* compiled a huge corpus of *ḥadîth* during the succeeding centuries. Of such collections the most important are the following:

1. The *Muwaṭṭa* of Mâlik ibn Anas (93-179 H.)
2. The *Musnad* of Sulaymân ibn Dâud ibn al-Jârûd 'Abû Dâud al-Ṭayâlisî (133-204 H.)
3. The *Musnad* of 'Abû 'Abd Allah Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Ḥanbal (164-241 H.)
4. The *Sunan* of 'Abû Muḥammad 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmân al-Dârimî (181-255 H.)
5. The *Ṣaḥîḥ* of 'Abû 'Abd Allah Muḥammad ibn Ismâ'îl al-Bukhârî (194-256 H.)
6. The *Sunan* of 'Abû Dâud Sulaymân ibn al-Ash'ath al-Azdî al-Sijistânî (202-275 H.)
7. The *Ṣaḥîḥ* of 'Abû al-Ḥusayn Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjâj al-Qushayrî al-Naysâbûrî (206-261 H.)
8. The *Sunan* of 'Abû 'Abd al-Raḥmân Aḥmad ibn Shu'ayb ibn 'Alî ibn Baḥr al-Nasâ'î (214-303 H.)
9. The *Ṣaḥîḥ* of 'Abû Bakr Muḥammad ibn Isḥâq ibn Khuzaymah, al-Sulamî, al-Naysâbûrî (223-311)
10. The *Sunan* of 'Abû al-Ḥasan 'Alî ibn 'Umar ibn Aḥmad al-Dâraquṭnî (306-385 H.)
11. The *Mustadrak* etc. of Al-Hâkim 'Abd Allah Muḥmmad ibn 'Abd Allah ibn Muḥammad al-Naysâbûrî (321-405 H.); and
12. The *Sunan* of 'Abû Bakr Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Alî ibn 'Abd Allah al-Bayḥaqî (384-458 H.)

As the work of collection and compilation of *ḥadîth* continued over centuries, quite a mumber of fabricated and forged reports and modified versions of original reports came into being, due mainly to the desire to further personal, party, group and sectarian interests. A good deal of forged reports got into circulation due also to subversive motives on the part of

insincere converts from heterogeneous backgrounds. Many such false and fabricated reports as also Judaeo-Christian traditions found their way into most of the commentaries of the Qur'ân and the chronicles written during those centuries. Fortunately, however, the *muḥaddithûn* and scholars were aware of this fact and they took special care to subject the reports and narrations to rigorous scrutiny and tests, selecting and incorporating in their compilations only those that passed the various types of tests. In fact, before long, an independent branch of academic discipline, the principles or science of *ḥadîth* (*'uṣûl al-ḥadîth*) came into existence. Broadly, the process of scrutiny and investigation took two distinct lines — (a) a thorough investigation into the character, personality, capacity and background of each and every transmitter of a particular report,[1] and (b) textual criticism with special reference to internal evidence, compatibility or otherwise with the Qur'ân and well-established facts and, in general, with the rules of rational criticism.[2] As thus scrutinized and sifted, the main collections are generally authentic and trustworthy. For details of the life and activities of the Prophet we have to depend on this vast *ḥadîth* literature.

III. THE EARLY *SÎRAH/MAGHÂZÎ* LITERATURE

The third source of information on the life and activities of the Prophet is the works of some early chroniclers.[3] As indicated earlier these also consist of reports or traditions, but are arranged more or less in chronological orders. The earliest of such works also may be traced to the middle of the first century H. when the learned élite of Madina had turned their attention to the task of collecting and preserving *ḥadîth*. Indeed, both types of activities were two aspects of the same urge to obtain and preserve information about the deeds and words of the Prophet. Hence, in the early stages, more or less the same scholars were both collectors of *ḥadîth* as well as compilers of *maghâzî* literature. It may be noted here that at the early stages the term *maghâzî* was

1. This line of investigation led to the emergence of an extensive biographical literature (*Ṭabaqât* and books on *Rijâl*).

2. See for instance Al-Ḥâkim 'Abû 'Abd Allah Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allah al-Naysâbûrî, *Al-Madkhal 'ilâ Ma'rifat al-Iklîl*, (ed. J. Robson), London, 1953. Also Al-Ḥâkim's *Kitâb Ma'rifat 'Ulûm al-Ḥadîth* (ed. Sayyid Mu'aẓẓam Ḥusayn), second impression, Madina, 1397 / 1977.

3. See for a detailed account J. Horovitz, "The Earliest biographies of the Prophet and their authors" (tr. from German by Marmaduke Pickthall), in *Islamic Culture*, I, 1927, pp. 535-559; II, 1928, pp. 22-50, 164-182 and 495-523.

used rather loosely to denote both the *sîrah* proper as well as the campaigns. The distinction between the two terms came to be made at a subsequent stage.

The first scholar who is known to have concerned himself with *maghâzî* in its wider sense was the same 'Abân ibn 'Uthmân (b.15-20 H.) to whom reference has already been made. He was *Khalîfah* 'Abd al-Malik's governor of Madina from 75 to 83 H. It appears that he made a collection of materials relating to the *sîrah* but nothing except a few isolated reports from him survive. Similarly his junior contemporary and a prominent member of the learned community of Madina, 'Urwah ibn al-Zubayr ibn al-'Awwâm (26-94 H.), also devoted himself to the subject. He not only collected and transmitted a large number of reports but also gathered information about a number of specific events of the Prophet's life. In reply to queries made by *Khalîfahs* 'Abd al-Malik and Al-Walîd, 'Urwah submitted a number of written statements. These are quoted by Ibn Isḥâq, Al-Wâqidî, Ibn Sa'd and Al-Ṭabarî. In these written communications 'Urwah does not generally mention his sources, though while reporting a *ḥadîth* he usually refers to 'Umm al-Mu'minîn 'Â'ishah as his source.[1]

There were at least two others from among the *Tâbi'ûn* who dealt with *maghâzî*. They were Shurahbîl ibn Sa'd (d.123 H.) and Wahb ibn Munabbih (34-110 H.). The former reported *ḥadîth* from Zayd ibn Thâbit,'Abû Hurayrah and 'Abû Sa'îd al-Khudrî (r.a.). Shuraḥbîl is said to have written down lists of emigrants to Madina and of those who took part in the battles of Badr and 'Uḥud. He is, however, regarded as an untrustworthy authority. Neither Ibn Isḥâq nor Al-Wâqidî cites him, but Ibn Sa'd reproduces his report concerning the Prophet's journey from Qubâ' to Madina.[2] The other scholar, Wahb ibn Munabbih, was a "South Arabian of Persian origin" and took special interest in Jewish and Christian traditions. He is said to have compiled, among other works, a *Kitâb al-Mubtada'* and a *Kitâb al-Maghâzî*.[3] He is quoted by Ibn Isḥâq, Al-Ṭabarî, Mas'ûdî, Ibn Qutaybah and others. Nowhere, however, Wahb mentions the sources of his information.

1. Recently the available fragments of 'Urwah's writings have been collected by M.M. A'ẓamî and published under the title: *Maghâzî Rasûlullah Ṣallallahu 'alayhi wa Sallama*, Riyadh, 1401.

2. Ibn Sa'd. I. 237.

3. A fragment of the latter work was discovered by C.H. Becker which is preserved in Heidelberg. See *Islamic Culture*, I. p. 558

Coming to the succeeding generation, *Tâbi'û-Tabi'în*, there were at least three scholars who deserve special mention. They are: 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abû Bakr ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Amr ibn Ḥazm (d.130/135 H.), 'Âṣim ibn 'Umar ibn Qatâdah (d.120 H.) and Muḥammad ibn 'Ubayd Allah ibn 'Abd Allah ibn Shihâb al-Zuhrî (51-124 H.).

Reference has already been made to the ancestors of 'Abd Allah, particularly to his father 'Abû Bakr ibn Muḥammad. 'Abd Allah's family background enabled him to make a considerable collection of materials relating to *maghâzî* in its wider sense. Ibn Isḥâq, Al-Wâqidî Ibn Sa'd and Al-Ṭabarî all cite him as their authority and quote him frequently. According to Horovitz, the *Kitâb al-Maghâzî* referred to in the *Fihrist* as a compilation of 'Abd Allah's nephew 'Abd al-Mâlik, but of which no trace has been found, "probably consisted of the collected material which he had acquired from his uncle".[1] A notable aspect of 'Abd Allah's work was that he attempted to establish the chronological order of the Prophet's campaigns which Ibn Isḥâq adopts.[2] 'Abd Allah also transmits the Prophet's communications to various Arabian princes and deals with the Arab tribes' delegations to the Prophet.[3] He does not, however, mention his authorities with regard to many of his reports. At times he also incorporates his own views in the reports he transmits.

'Âṣim ibn 'Umar ibn Qatâdah ibn al-Nu'mân also belonged to a noble Madinan family. His grandfather Qatâdah (r.a.) was a close companion of the Prophet. 'Âsim was renowned for his knowledge of the *sîrah* and *maghâzî*.[4] *Khalîfah* 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azîz assigned him a chair at the mosque at Damascus to narrate to the people the Prophet's campaigns and the noble deeds of his Companions.[5] He is one of the chief authorities of Ibn Isḥâq and Al-Wâqidî for the *maghâzî* properly so called. Like 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abû Bakr, 'Âṣim too frequently does not mention his authorities and also mingles his opinions with the reports he transmits.

Muḥammad ibn Muslim ibn 'Ubayd Allah ibn 'Abd Allah ibn Shihâb al-

1. *Ibid.*, II, 1928, p. 26, citing *Fihrist*, 226.
2. Al-Ṭabarî, *Târîkh*, III, 152-153 (I / 1756).
3. *Ibid.*, 120-121 (I / 1717-1718).
4. Ibn Qutaybah, *Al-Ma'ârif*, 466; Al-Dhahabî, *Siyar*, V, 240.
5. Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhîb*, V, 54.

Zuhrî belonged to the Banû Zuhrah of Makka.[1] He received his knowledge, among others, form 'Urwah ibn al-Zubayr and ultimately became the most learned of the Madinan society of his time. He was equally well-versed in *ḥadîth*, genealogy and *maghâzî*. He had a remarkable memory. Nonetheless, like many others of his time, he used to write down the reports he collected and he passed these on to the succeeding generation. He collected and recorded a large number of *ḥadîth* and, as indicated earlier, received a commission from *Khalîfah* 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azîz to make a compilation of it. Among his other works we find mention of a *Maghâzî*; but it survives only in the from of quotations in the works of others.[2] From these quotations, especially those in Ibn Sa'd, it appears that Al-Zuhrî dealt not only with the *maghâzî* proper but also with the other events of the Prophet's life. He appears also to have distinguished between the terms *sîrah* and *maghâzî*. Al-Zuhrî generally gives *isnâd* with his reports, but sometimes it is lacking.

During his long and distinguished academic life Al-Zuhrî became teacher to a large number of pupils. Of them three came to prominence as writers of *sîrah/maghâzî*. They were Mûsâ ibn 'Uqbah (55-141 H.), Ma'mar ibn Râshid (96-154 H.) and Muḥammad ibn Isḥâq (85-150/151 H.)

Mûsâ ibn 'Uqbah acquired knowledge at the Prophet's mosque, principally under the tutelage of Al-Zuhrî. He is reckoned as a trustworthy and reliable authority. He compiled a book on *maghâzî* which has come down to us in fragments and quotations. From these extracts it is clear that his main authority was Al-Zuhrî. Al-Wâqidî, Ibn Sa'd and Al-Ṭabarî reproduce reports from him on a number of topics.

Ma'mar ibn Râshid was born at Baṣra but settled in Yaman. He was well-known as a *muḥaddith* and also compiled a *Kitâb al-Maghâzî*. Like the works of his predecessors it also survives only in quotations and extracts in subsequent works like those of Al-Wâqidî, Ibn Sa'd, Al-Ṭabarî and Balâdhurî. Most of his statements go back to Al-Zuhrî. He paid a good deal of attention to Biblical history and, to some extent, to the life of the Prophet before migration. He is one of the main sources of Al-Wâqidî.

1. Al-Zuhrî's ancestry met with that of the Prophet in the person of Kilâb ibn Murrah. The Prophet's mother 'Âminah and the famous Companion Sa'd ibn 'Abî Waqqâṣ (r.a.) belonged to the Zuhrah clan. Zuhrah was brother of Quṣayy ibn Kilâb who settled the Quraysh at Makka.

2. Recently the fragments of Al-Zhurî's reports on *maghâzî* have been collected and edited by Dr. Suhayl Zakkâr under the title *Maghâzî al-Nabawiyyah*, Damascus, 1401 / 1981.

Of all the students of Al-Zuhrî, Muḥammad ibn Isḥâq ibn Yasâr is best known if only because his work, the *Kitâb al-Maghâzî,* has come down to us more or less in its complete from through the edition of ibn Hishâm (d.218 H.). Muḥammad's grandfather, Yasâr, was a Christian Arab, while his father Isḥâq was a zealous collector of *ḥadîth*. Ibn Isḥâq received his knowledge, besides Al-Zuhrî, from 'Âṣim ibn 'Umar ibn Qatâdah and 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abû Bakr, and supplemented it by other accounts obtained in Egypt and Iraq. He wrote his work for *Khalîfah* 'Abû Ja'far al-Manṣûr (r.136-158 H.), though not on an official commission from him.[1] The edition of Ibn Hishâm, which is best known as *Al-Sîrat al-Nabawiyyah*, was based on a copy of the work which he received from Ibn Isḥâq's immediate student, Al-Bukkâ'î (d.183 H.). Ibn Hishâm mentions, however, the alterations or omissions he made for the sake of reducing the volume of the work. He did not make any substantial change in the text. One notable omission made by him, for fear of "some people", was the report of the presence of 'Abbâs (r.a) in the battle of Badr on the Makkan side and his capture as a prisoner of war, a report which is preserved in Al-Ṭabarî. In fact, much of what is left out by Ibn Hishâm is preserved in the works of Al-Ṭabarî, Al-Azraqî and others.[2]

Though a generally acceptable account, the value of Ibn Isḥâq's work is somewhat compromised by the fact that some of his notable contemporaries like Mâlik ibn 'Anas and Hishâm ibn 'Urwah questioned his credibility.[3] Ibn Isḥâq himself acknowledges that he received information from the Jews, Christians and Persians and incorporated their traditions and accounts in his work. Often he expresses his doubts about the information he gives by interjecting the expression: *fî mâ yaz'umûna* ("as they think").

Of the younger contemporaries of Ibn Isḥâq mention may be made of 'Abû Ma'shar (Najîḥ ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmân al-Sindî, d. 170 H.) who wrote a *Kitâb al-Maghâzî*,[4] but it has come down to us only in fragments quoted

1. Ibn Qutaybah, *Al-Ma'ârif*, p. 492 See for a detailed study on Ibn Isḥâq, J. Fück, *Muḥammad ibn Isḥaq*, Frunkfurt-am-Main, 1925.

2. A Guillaume, in his *Life of Muḥammad: A Translation of Ibn Isḥâq's Sîrat Rasûl Allah*, (London, 1955), has attempted to compile Ibn Isḥâq's work from different sources including that of Ibn Hishâm but excluding his additions and explanations. Recently Dr. Suhayl Zakkâr has edited a version of Ibn Isḥâq's work, as reported by Yûnus ibn Bukayr, under caption *Kitâb al-Siayr wa al-Maghâzî* of Ibn Isḥâq, Damascus, 1398 / 1978.

3. Ibn Qutaybah *Al-Ma'ârif*, 492; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhîb*, IX, 42-43.

4. Al-Dhahabî, *Siyar*, VII, 435-436; XII, 609.

chiefly in the works of Al-Wâqidî and ibn Sa'd. Early Muslim scholars had, however, a very unfavourable opinion about 'Abû Ma'shar.[1] Another younger contemporary of Ibn Isḥâq was Yaḥyâ ibn Sa'îd al-'Umawî (111/119-194) who also compiled a *Kitâb al-Maghâzî*[2] but it survives in quotations only. The latter's contemporary and also a younger contemporary of Ibn Isḥâq,'Abd Allah ibn Wahb (125-197 H.) wrote another *Kitâb al-Maghâzî*.[3] A yet another younger contemporary of Ibn Isḥâq, and very much contemporary with the two last mentioned scholars, was the famous author 'Abd al-Razzâq ibn Hammâm (126-211 H.) He also wrote a *Kitâb al-Maghazî*.[4] It is reproduced in his *Al-Muṣannaf*.[5] It is clear that the process of writing the account of the Prophet's life was well under way by Ibn Isḥâq's time.

Of these early scholars whose works have survived more or less in their complete forms the most notable is Muḥammad ibn 'Umar Al-Wâqidî (130-207 H.) He flourished during the time of *Khalîfahs* Hârûn al-Rashîd and Al-Ma'mûn, receiving special favours from the celebrated minister Yaḥyâ ibn Khâlid al-Barmakî. Al-Wâqidî was a versatile writer and compiled a number of works. Of them only the *Kitâb al-Magâhzî* has come down to us.[6] Al-Wâqidî mentions the authorities on whom he based his account, including Al-Zuhrî, Ma'mar and 'Abû Ma'shar and occasionally Mûsâ ibn 'Uqbah, but not Ibn Isḥâq at all, though, as Horovitz points out, it "cannot be doubted that Waqidi made use of Ibn Isḥâq's work."[7] Al-Wâqidî mentions, however, that he received reports from others besides those mentioned by him. He concentrates his attention on the Madina period of the Prophet's life. Muslim scholarly opinion about him is very unfavourable. He is almost unanimously repudiated as an unsound and untrustworthy authority and as having

1. Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhîb*, X, 420-422; Al-Dhahabî, *Siyar*, VII, 437.
2. Al-Dhahabî, *Siyar*, I, 344: IX, 139; XX, 195; XXIII, 88.
3. *Ibid.*, IX, 225.
4. *Ibid*, XIX, 306; XXII, 357.
5. *Al-Muṣannaf*, V, 313-492.
6. The first third of the work was edited and published by Von Kremer in the Bibliotheca Indica Series under caption: *Waqîdî's History of Muḥammad's Campaigns*, Calcutta, 1850. An abridged German version was published by Julius Wellhausen under title: *Muḥammad in Madinah* (Berlin, 1882). Recently the complete work has been edited in three volumes by Marsden Jones.
7. *Islamic Culture*, II, 518.

tampered with or fabricated *ḥadîth* for his purpose.[1] His secretary Ibn Sa'd, however, considers him a good authority on *sîrah* and *maghâzî.*

Though initially a secretary and writer for Al-Wâqidî, Muḥammad Ibn Sa'd (168-230 H) in fact produced an independent and more valuable work in his *Al-Ṭabaqât al-Kubrâ.* The first two volumes of this encyclopaedic work are devoted to the life and activities of the Prophet; while the rest is a biographical dictionary of the Companions and the generation following them. Though based on Al-Wâqidî's work, Ibn Sa'd provides greater details, furnishes fuller *isnâd* and, in general, produces more complete reports. He also pays special attention to the personal characteristics of the Prophet, produces a number of original documents and arranges his materials more systematically. His *Ṭabqât* proper, or the life of the Companions and the *Tâbi'ûn* is very valuable as it provides rare information about the various aspects of the *sîrah.*[2] Muslim scholarly opinions are in favour of Ibn Sa'd and he is generally regarded as a sound and trustworthy narrator.

Closely following Ibn Sa'd, but not so comprehensive in his treatment of the subject, was Ibn 'Abî al-Dunyâ ('Abd Allah ibn Muḥammad ibn Sufyân, b. 208) who compiled a *Kitâb al-Maghâzî.*[3] It has not, however, reached us intact. He is outshined by his junior contemporary, the celebrated scholar Muḥammad ibn Jarîr al-Ṭabarî (224-320). His *Târikh al-Rusul wa al-Mulûk* (or *Târikh al-Umam wa al-Mulûk*) is an encyclopaedic work of which the second and third volumes[4] contain an account of the life and activities of the Prophet. Much of it is, however, based on Ibn Isḥâq's work. He is also the author of the comprehensive commentary of the Qur'ân, *Jâmi' al-Bayân 'an Ta'wîl 'Ây al-Qur'ân.* It is unique in that it is the first comprehensive commentary based on reports (*'âthâr*) which has come down to us.

With Al-Ṭabarî the early classical phase of the writings on *sîrah/maghâzî* may be said to have ended. The tradition of writing on the subject was of course continued and many other compilations came into existence in the succeeding centuries.[5] Simultaneously, works on the personality and noble

1. Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhîb*, IX, 363-368; Al-Dhahabî, *Mîzân*, II, 425-426.

2. Edited by E. Sachu and others, Leiden, 1924-28. A good reprint is that of Dâr Ṣâdir, Beirut, 1405 / 1985, in 9 volumes.

3. Al-Dhahabi *Siyar 'A'lâm al-Nubalâ'*, XIII, 403.

4. Of the Dâr al-Ma'ârif, Cairo, 1978 edtion, in 11 vols.

5. See for a list of the more important of these works, Bibliography to the present work.

deeds of the Prophet (*Dalâ'il* and *Shamâ'il*) and on the lives of the Companions and the *Tâbi'ûn*, together with commentaries of the Qur'ân and further compilations of *ḥadîth* came into existence.

It should be clear from the above brief survey that systematic collection and preservation of *ḥadîth* and writing of *sîrah /magâhazî* began almost simultaneously, by the middle of the first century H. at the latest, and that both emanated from the same urge for collecting and preserving the words, deeds and practices of the Prophet and his companions. In fact the same group of scholars were almost invariably involved in both types of activities. But whereas in collecting and recording a *ḥadîth* which had any bearing on a doctrinal or legal point they were generally very careful in checking their authorities and in applying other tests for authenticity, they appear to have been rather easy in their attitude in respect of reports of a historical nature.

The Qur'ân, the *ḥadîth* and the classical *sîrah* and ancillary works are complementary and supplementary to one another. We have to depend on all these three *sources* in order to obtain a fairly complete view of the Prophet's life and activities. In fact, beginning with the work of Ibn Isḥâq/Ibn Hishâm, the Qur'ân and the reoports have both been used in all subsequent writings on the *sîrah*.

The Qur'ân, though it does not provide complete historical date about the life and activities of the Prophet, is nevertheless unique in respect of authenticity and contemporaneity. Any information or viewpoint found in any other source, including even authentic *ḥadîth*, must be tested and verified, as far as possible, in the light of the Qur'ân. Anything found contrary to it or not in harmony with its facts, spirit and purport, must be rejected as untrue and unacceptable.

As regards *ḥadîth* and the *sîrah/maghâzî* literature, though they both are compilations of reports, a position of primacy must be accorded generally to the reports contained in the *ḥadîth* collections properly so called; because these were acknowledgedly compiled with more care to the rules determining authenticity. But if a report in any of the *ḥadîth* collections is found to be weaker in respect of *isnâd* and other tests than the one on the same point contained in a *sîrah* work, preference should of course be given to the latter. The simple principle, followed not only in historical but in all types of investigation, is that a weaker evidence must yield place to the stronger. In dealing with the *Sîrah* this principle may be spelt out in the following rules:

(1) Where any authentic *ḥadîth* is available on any point of fact or interpretation, it should be given preference to any other report if it is not in conformity with the former.

(2) Where two or more authentic reports on the same fact or point give divergent accounts or views, the one or ones for which support is available in the Qur'ân, the other reports of less authenticity and in the works on the *sîrah* should be preferred.

(3) The same rule should apply if such divergence is found in two or more equally weak reports on the same point or fact.

(4) Where neither the Qur'ân, nor any authentic *ḥadîth* provides information on any point or fact, reliance has of course to be made on the reports or accounts found in the *sîrah* literature, though these might not meet all the requirements of authenticity.

Since the *sîrah /maghâzî* works are also compilations of reports, it has two important consequences. In the first place, these works contain more or less the same materials, each succeeding work appearing largely to be a re-narration of its preceding work. New facts and information are few and far between. In view of this fact, the work of Ibn Isḥâq/Ibn Hishâm, based as it is on the works of their predecessors, has hardly been surpassed or superseded by subsequent works. Despite some of its obvious shortcomings, it still remains the basic work for the broad outlines of the Prophet's life-story. Secondly, the sameness of the information and materials in the different works suggests that though many of the works on *sîrah/maghâzî* have not come down to us in tact perhaps nothing of importance or significance has for that very reason been lost to us.

IV. THE SOURCES AND THE ORIENTALISTS

It is well-known that some orientalists have been instrumental in discovering, editing and publishing a number of original Arabic works and manuscripts. The present section is not intended to recapitulate that aspect of their work, far less to detract from the value of their work in this respect. Here only an attempt has been made to indicate the salient aspects of their attitude to and use of the sources in dealing with the Prophet's life.

As regards the Qur'ân it needs hardly any mentioning that the orientalists do not acknowledge it to be the word of Allah. If they did so, they would probably have ceased to be orientalists. On the contrary they attempt to

attribute its authorship, by some device or other, to the Prophet. From this premise they advance a number of related propositions or speculations. These are, in the main, as follows:

(1) That the Qur'ân (and for that matter Islam) is based on the ideas and facts derived from the systems of Judaism and Christianity prevailing in Arabia at the time.[1]

(2) That it represents the Prophet's ideas of socio-religious reforms arising out of his time, environment and circumstances.

(3) That the Prophet derived his literary style mainly from that of some ancient Arab poets.

(4) That the language of the Qur'ân is not quite pure Arabic, as claimed, but contains a large number of foreign words.[2]

These questions in fact relate to the whole nature and background of the Prophethood of Muḥammad (ﷺ) as also to the nature of the revelation he received. These have therefore been dealt with, as far as practicable, in their appropriate places in this work.[3]

Since the nineteenth century another trend among the orientalists has been to rearrange the texts of the Qur'ân in "chronological order" in order to trace what they assume to be the "gradual" development in Muḥammad's ﷺ ideas and attitudes. The line was indicated by Theodore Nöldeke. On the basis of it A. Rodwell carried out his translation of the Qur'ân.[4] Others like G. Well[5] and W. Muir[6] took up the theme almost simultaneously. The trend

1. Almost all the orientalists are of this view. A sort of consolidated statements may be found in:

(a) Richard Bell, *The Origin of Islam in its Christian Environment*, Edinburgh, 1926, reprinted, London, 1968.

(b) C.C. Torrey, *The Jewish Foundation of Islam*, New York 1933; reprinted with. F. Rosenthal's Introduction, 1967.

2. A Jeffery, *Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'ân*, Borado, 1937.

3. See Chapters IV, XI, XII, XIV-XX.

4. A. Rodwell, *The Coran, Translation with Suras arranged in Chronological order*, London, 1876. The first Muslim to follow suit appears to be Mirza Abul Fazl (of Bengal). See his *The Qur'ân. Arabic Text and English Translation, arranged chronologically*, 1911 (British Museum Cat. No. 14512. d. 15).

5. G. Weil, *Historisch-Kritische Einletung in den Koran*, Bielefeld and Leipzig, 1878.

6. W. Muir, *The Coran, its Composition and Teaching*, London, 1878.

has been carried to extremes, however, by Richard Bell.[1] Working on two basic but erroneous assumptions that (a) the normal unit of revelation was a short passage and (b) that the Prophet "revised"the texts before combining them into *sûrahs*, Bell classifies the Qur'ânic passages into various types, calling them the "sign" type, the "slogan" type, the "soothsayer" type, etc. He also makes a number of sheer conjectures to support his hypothesis of "revision". For instance, he advances the absurd suggestions that "reservations" introduced in the text by *illâ* (except) are later additions; and that the existence of what he calls an apparently "extraneous" theme in an otherwise homogeneous passage was due to the original text and the addition having been written on two different sides of the same writing material and then of their having been mixed up at the time of "editing".[2] Supporting Bell's suggestions in general, Watt pays special attention to the theme of "revision"and piles further assumptions upon those of Bell.[3]

The subject indeed needs an independent treatment. Only it may be pointed out here that the purpose of the orientalists seems to have been not so much to clarify as to confuse. As M. Hamidullah points out, almost every assumption of Bell is hedged in by qualifications and reservations like "perhaps", "seems to be" and the like, so much so that a reader is often unable to make out what the writer means. For instance, on p.75 (of the *Introduction to the Qur'ân*) there is the following passage: "These slogans [sic] are difficult to date, and it is doubtful if any of these which appear in the Qur'ân are very early, though some of them may quite well be so."[4] More of an admission of the confusing nature of Bell's suggestions are Watt's observations: "even if we suspect that the present order of the text is due to the use of two sides of the writing material, we cannot with any degree of certainty say what was on the back of what." "It has now become a question of dating separately each passage of a few verses. In the case of revisions, a single word even may have a different date from the rest of the verse."[5]

1. R. Bell, *Introduction to the Qur'ân*, Edinburgh University press 1953.
2. *Ibid*, 74-78, 83.
3. W.M. Watt, "The dating of the Qur'ân: A Review of Richard Bell's theories", *J.R.A.S.*, April, 1957, pp. 46-56. See also his revised edition of *Bell's Introduction to the Qur'ân*, Edinburgh University Press, 1970
4. M. Hamidullah's review of Bell's *Introduction to the Qur'ân, The Islamic Quarterly*, Vol. I, No. 4, Dec., 1954, pp. 239-243 (the observation is on p. 240).
5. Watt, "The Dating of the Qur'ân etc.", *op. cit.*, 53, 55.

It is on the basis of such dating of the Qur'ânic passages that the orientalists attempt to trace what they think the gradual development of the Prophet's ideas and concepts. For instance, Watt makes his own selection of what he considers to be the very early passages of the Qur'ân and on that basis suggests that at the beginning of his mission the Prophet had only a vague and imperfect concept of monotheism.[1] Some other features of the orientalists' use of the Qur'ân in dealing with the *sîrah* are as follows:

(a) Considering the Qur'ânic evidence in isolation without collating and supplementing it with the information contained in *ḥadîth* and the *sîrah* literature. Thus, for instance, it has been suggested that since the name "Muḥammad" does not occur in any Makkan *sûrah* the Prophet adopted the name in the Madinan period![2] By the same method of isolating the Qur'ânic evidence from other evidences it has been attempted to show that neither was persecution upon the Muslims at Makka severe, nor was there any attempt as such to kill the Prophet.

(b) Taking a passage out of its context and putting a wrong interpretation on it. An instance of this type of use of the Qur'ânic evidence is the suggestion that in 53:11-18 *(sûrat al-Najm)* the Prophet claimed to have seen God.[3]

(c) Taking or emphasizing just a part of an *'âyah*, to the exclusion of its other part and thus putting on it a meaning just the opposite to what is conveyed by the passage as a whole. An instance of this type is the suggestion, based on 16:103 (*sûrat al-Naḥl*) that the Qur'ân shows that the Prophet was tutored by a person![4]

(d) Wrong interpretation of a passage to get support for a specific assumption. For instance, the passage 17:74 (*sûrat al-'Isrâ'*) is interpreted to show that the desire for making a compromise with the unbelievers was so prolonged and strong in the Prophet that Allah had to intervene to restrain him from his doing so![5]

(e) Insistence upon only one shade of meaning of an expression or term to the exclusion of the other senses in which it is used in the Qur'ân itself. An instance is the interpretetation of the term *waḥy* in the sense of "suggestion"

1. See below, Chap. XXIII, sections I and II.
2. See below Ch. VI, section II.
3. See below Ch. XVIII, section V.
4. See below Ch. XI, section IV.
5. *Infra*, Ch. XXXI, sec. III.

only, not verbal communication from Allah.[1]

As in the case of the Qur'ân, so in that of *ḥadîth* the orientalists have attempted to dislodge it as the second most important source of information on the *sîrah* and on Islam in general..[2] It has been attempted to show that *ḥadîth* literature came into existence at the earliest in the second century of Islam, that the *isnâd* system in it is not reliable and that most of the reports, if not all, are fabrications brought into existence by party, political, dogmatic, juristic and ideological exigencies of the second/third century of Islam. The argumentations and assumptions of the previous scholars were brought to a climax, so to say, by J. Schacht in his *Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence* published in 1950. Besides complementing and supporting his predecessors' views Schacht advanced two novel suggestions, namely, (a) that Islamic law falls outside the scope of the "religion" of Islam so that the Qur'ân might virtually be ignored as a source of Islamic jurisprudence and (b) that even the apparently historical *ḥadîth* was not free from suspicion because, as he says, this too was formulated on juristic considerations.

Not to speak of the Muslim scholars who view the above mentioned theories and assumptions untenable,[3] even many Western scholars find it difficult to accept Schacht's extreme conclusions. For instance N.J. Coulson, who otherwise recommends Schacht's work, points out that when his thesis "is systematically developed to the extent of holding that the evidence of legal traditions carries us back to about the year A.H.100 only; and when the authenticity of every alleged ruling of the Prophet is denied, a void is assumed, or rather created, in the picture of the development of law in early Muslim society. From a practical standpoint, and taking the attendant circumstances into consideration, the notion of such a vacuum is difficult to accept."[4]

1. See below Ch. XVIII, section III.

2. See for instance Ignaz Goldziher, *Moḥamedanische Studien* (first published 1890), Vol. II, tr. into English by C.R. Barber and S. M. Stern under title *Muslim Studies*, Vol. II, London, 1971; and A Guillaume, *The Traditions of Islam: An Introduction to the Study of the Hadith Literature*, Oxford, 1924.

3. See for instance Moḥsin 'Abd al-Nâẓir, *Dirâsât Goldziher fî al-Suunnah wa makânatuhâ al-'ilmiyyah*, (Arabic text), unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Tunis, 1404 / 1984; and M. Luqman Salafi, *Naqd al-Ḥadîth 'inda al-Muḥaddithîn sanadan wa matanan wa daḥḍ mazâ'im al-Mustashriqîn*, Riyadh, 1984.

4. N.J. Coulson, *A History of Islamic Law*, London, 1964, pp. 64-65. See also his "Euro- =

The views and assumptions of Schacht have been dealt with specially by M. M. A'ẓamî. It has been shown that Schacht's views about *isnâd* are wrong[1] and that his suggestion regarding the "Living Tradition" and its having been projected back onto the Prophet are unfounded.[2] By a reference to the specific juridical activities of the Prophet as well as to the first century Islamic legal literature it has been shown that Schacht is wrong in thinking that law in the first century of Islam was not based on the Qur'ân and the *sunnah*. Taking Schacht on his own grounds and quoting in extenso the very texts and authorities cited by him, A'ẓamî has convincingly demonstrated that in each case Schacht has taken his argument out of context, has misunderstood or misinterpreted the texts and has otherwise advanced assumptions and conclusions not quite substantiated by the authorities he has adduced in their support. Further, it has been shown that in forming his opinions about such jurisconsults as Imâm Mâlik, Schacht has relied not on their own writings but on what their contemporaries or near-contemporaries have said about them.

It is on such faulty and untenable Goldziher-Schacht assumptions about *ḥadîth* that the orientalists have generally based their approach to it as a source of the Prophet's life-story. And this approach to *ḥadîth* and their views about the Qur'ân determine their attitude to the *sîra* literature in general. Thus one group of scholars take up the position that the latter is essentially made up of *ḥadîth* material arranged in biographical order; but since *ḥadîth* literature is not reliable and is in any case only elaborations of the Qur'ânic materials, the only independent source about the Prophet's life is the Qur'ân; but then as the latter does not provide any chronological details and restricts itself at best to allusions and indirect references, hardly anything definite can be known about the Prophet's life. In other words, there is almost an insuperable historical "problem"regarding him.[3]

Differing from this group, the other group of orientalists treat the *sîrah* literature as the main source for the Prophet's life, though they do not ignore

= pean criticism of Ḥadîth Literature" in *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature: Arabic Literature to the end of the Umayyad Period*, Cambridge, 1983, pp. 317-321.

1. M.M. A'ẓamî, *Studies in Early Hadith Literature*, Beirut, 1968, Chaps. VI, VII.

2. M.M. A'ẓamî, *On Schacht's Origins of Muḥammadan Jurisprudence*, King Saud University, Riyadh & John Willy & Sons, Inc, New York, 1985.

3. See for instance Régis Blachère, *La Problème de Maḥomet Essai de biographie critique du foundateur de l'Islam*, Paris, 1952.

the value of the Qur'ân. This position is best summed up by Watt who says: "What in fact Western biographers have done is to assume the truth of the broad outlines of the picture....given by the *Sîrah,* and to use this as the framework into which to fit as much Qur'ânic material as possible. The sounder methodolgy is to regard the Qur'ân and the early traditional accounts as complementary sources..." [1]

The expression "the early traditional accounts" used in the above passage refers to the *sîrah* literature, not to the "tradition" or more properly *ḥadîth,* for which Watt uses another word, "anecdotes."[2] In his support for the reports in the *sîrah* literature Watt even seems to defend what is called the family *isnâd* system;[3] though, like the other orientalists in general, he considers the *isnâd* system in the *ḥadîth* literature proper as of little value.

It may be observed that the first group of scholars are near the truth in thinking that the *sîrah* literature is more or less another version of *ḥadîth;* but they are very much wrong in assuming that there is nothing in the *sîrah* that might be considered independent historical material. More particulary, they are wrong in assuming, as one of their spokesmen says, that "in the face of the Christian historical sources which attest the miraculous figure and the divinity of Jesus," the need for doing the same for the founder of Islam arose, and "the already existing dogmatic and juristic *ḥadîth* are collected and chronologically arranged."[4] The question of the correctness of the premise apart, it may be pointed out that the *sîrah* literature is not made up only or primarily of materials designed to provide analogous miracles for the Prophet!

Similarly the second group of scholars are right in holding that the *sîrah* literature provides the broad outlines of the Prophet's life; but they are wrong in assuming that the *sîrah,* though a distinct corpus of literature, is essentially different from *ḥadîth* literature or that the two developed in two watertight compartments, in two different periods, the former in an earlier period

1. W.M. Watt, *M. at M.,* XV. See also his "The materials used by Ibn Isḥâq" in Bernard Lewis & P.M. Holt (eds.), *Historians of the Middle East,* London, 1962, 23-34.

2. Watt, *M. at M.,* XI.

3. Watt, "The reliability of Ibn Isḥâq's sources" in *La Vie Du Prophét Maḥomet,* Colloque de Strassbourg, October, 1980, (pp. 31-43), pp. 40-41. Silmilar support to the *isnâd* system is given also by Maxime Rodinson in "A Critical Survey of Modern Studies on Muḥammad", in Marlin Swartz (ed.) *Studies in Islam,* London, 1981 (pp. 23-85), p. 44.

4. C.H. Becker, quoted in *Historians of the Middle East, op. cit.,* p. 23.

and the latter in a subsequent period. As already shown, the compilation of *sîrah* literature grew out of the same urge for collecting and preserving the *sunnah* of the Prophet and that it as well as the collection and preservation of *ḥadîth* started simultaneously, by the second half of the first century of Islam at the latest, and at the hands of almost the same group of scholars.

But though differing in their attitude to the *sîrah* literature as such, in practice both groups of scholars make use more or less of all the three sources in their treatment of the Prophet's life. In doing so they adopt almost the same methods in respect of the "reports" in the *sîrah* literature (also in *ḥadîth* literature) as they use in respect of the Qur'ânic evidence. Thus often they:

(a) take a particular report in isolation, without collating or supplementing it with the Qur'ânic or other evidence on the same subject;

(b) make use of weaker or even spurious reports if they fall in line with a particular point of view, without considering at all the question of the authenticity of the reports in question or without taking into consideration other reports on the same subject that tend to give a different view ;

(c) take the report out of context and put on it a wrong and untenable interpretation;

(d) take only a part of a report to support a particular point of view, instead of taking the report as a whole which would otherwise give a different picture; and

(e) in so doing, impute motives to reporters or even to the authors that are in no way substantiated.

Each and every one of these aspects of the orientalists' use of the "reports" whether in the *sîrah* literature proper or in the *ḥadîth* literature would be clear as we proceed with the story in the present work.

CHAPTER II
THE BACKGROUND

I. THE LAND AND THE PEOPLE

Arabia is the largest peninsula on the surface of the earth, being nearly one-third of Europe in size. It forms the southwestern wing of Asia, joined with Africa by the Sinai desert and Egypt. It is surrounded on three sides by waters—the Red Sea to the west, the Arabian (Persian) Gulf to the east and the Arabian Sea to the south. Its northern boundary may be said to be an imaginary line from the Gulf of al-'Aqaba in the west to the Tigris-Euphrates valley in the east. Geographically the deserts of Syria and Iraq form part of the peninsula. Geologists think that it once formed a continuation of the Sahara desert on the one hand and the Central Iranian and the Gobi Desert on the other; and that subsequently it became separated by the depression of the Red Sea which, however, could not alter its arid nature.

The Arabian peninsula is skirted in the south and west by mountain ranges of varying heights, reaching some 14000 feet in the south and some 10000 feet in the north. Beginning from Ḥaḍramaut in the south these ranges run almost parallel to the coastline, through Yaman, the Asir region and all along the Hijaz including the towns of Makka and Ṭâ'if and meeting the ranges in the Sinai, Palestine, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. There are small ranges in the eastern region also, particularly in Oman where the Al-Akhḍar mountain rises to a height of about 10000 feet. On the west the mountains rise rather steeply, leaving a narrow coastal belt of plain and comparatively fertile lands. From the mountainous region in the west, which averages an altitude of about 4000 feet at about one hundred and fifty miles inland, the country to the east is a vast plateau, highlighted by the plateau of Najd, sloping gradually to the east coast.

The mountain ranges in the south and north prevent respectively the monsoon rains from the Indian Ocean and the winter rains from the Atlantic and the Mediterranean Sea from reaching the interior of the land. Hence rainfall is generally scanty in most parts, though there might be occasional heavy downpours at many places including Makka, Madina, Ṭâ'if and Riyadh. In dim antiquity the land was probably more humid and rainfall more plenty, as indicated by the existence of numerous *wâdîs* or stream-beds. Of the desert proper, there are three main regions — Al-Nufûd in the

north, Al-Rub' al-Khâlî (the Vacant Quarter) in the south, which in itself is almost the size of France, and Al-Dahna, which is a sort of a corridor of desert linking the two above mentioned northern and southern deserts and running by the east central region. The rest of the peninsula is steppeland, together with vast areas of fissured lava lands, particularly in the central, western and northern regions. The steppelands are sprinkled with numerous fertile oases and settlements. There are some remarkably fertile regions in the west and south, as also along the coast. In general Arabia is one of the hottest and driest countries of the world. The climates are rather extreme. It is very hot during the summer, and quite cold in the winter. In the winter season the temperature in some places in the north and south falls far below zero degree centigrade.

A look at the map would at once make it clear that Arabia forms a link by land as well as by sea between Asia, Africa and Europe — the three continents that till the geographical discoveries of the 15th/16th centuries were thought to constitute the entire world. Arabia is situated in the middle of this world. Not only that. From time immemorial it has been surrounded by a belt of ancient civilizations — the Nile Valley (Egyptian) civilization in the west, the Phoenician and Assyrian civilizations in the north, the Tigris-Euphartes Valley (Babylonian) civilization, the Persian civilization and the Indus Valley civilizations in the north-east and east. Further east-north-east lay the Chinese civilization. Arabia in ancient times was thus very much in the middle of the then "civilized" world. Modern researches show that it was the Semitic emigrants from the heart of Arabia who participated in building up the Egyptian, the Phoenician, the Assyrian and the Babylonian civilizations. And since dim antiquity Arabia also remained in constant trade and commercial contacts with the lands of Asia, Africa and Europe. Ships from India and the "Far East" touched its southern ports and sailed up the Red Sea; while land routes connected it with all the three continents. It lay on the highroad of world commerce and its inhabitants were the middle-men between the traders of the outer world The geographical situation of Arabia has made it strategically and commercially important throughout the ages.

The internal geographical features of Arabia and its climate prevented any foreign intrusion into it . Consequently, its inhabitants have through ages retained their ethnic purity. Historians are agreed that Arabia is the cradle and habitat of the Semitic population (descended from Sâm, son of Nûḥ, p.b.h.). As P.K. Hitti observes, though the term "Semitic" has of late come to

be used in the West more generally with reference to the Jews, because of their concentration in America, it is more appropriately applicable to the inhabitants of Arabia who, more than any other group of people, have retained the Semitic characteristics in their physical features, manners, customs, habits of thought and language. "The people of Arabia have remained virtually the same throughout all the recorded ages."[1]

Arab historians and traditions classify the inhabitants of Arabia into two broad divisions, their extinct ancestors and the surviving people. The extinct ancestors are called *al-'Arab al-Bâ'idah* (the extinct Arabs) who lived and flourished in dim antiquity but who have gone almost entirely out of existence. Examples of these extinct Arabs are the 'Âd, and the Thamûd, the Ṭasm, the Jadîs, the 'Amlaq and others of whom virtually no survivors are found. The Qur'ân makes repeated references to those bygone peoples, particularly to the 'Âd and the Thamûd. The former flourished in south Arabia (Ḥaḍramaut region) and the latter in north Arabia, particularly in the region of Al-Ḥijr. The Prophets Hûd[2] and Ṣâliḥ[3] (p.b.t.) were sent respectively to these two peoples. Recent excavations have unearthed archaeological remains that go only to confirm the truth of what the Qur'ân, the ancient Arab traditions and the Arab historians state in respect of these extinct ancestors of theirs. The Thamûd are mentioned by name in an inscription of the Assyrian King Sargon II, dated 715 B.C. They are also mentioned by Ptolemy and Pliny.[4]

The surviving people are divided into two categories, *al-'Arab al-'Âribah* or the Aboriginal Arabs and *al-'Arab al-Musta'ribah* or the Naturalized Arabs. The first are the descendants of Ya'rub son of Yashjub, son of Qaḥṭân (Joktan of the Old Testament).[5] They are therefore more generally called Qahtanite Arabs. Their habitat was Yaman. The famous Sabaean and Himyarite kingdoms and their high degree of civilization were the work of

1. P.K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs* (first published 1937), 10th edn. (1970), 11th print, 1986, pp. 8-9.

2. *Sûrah* XI of the Qur'ân is named after him. See specially its *'âyahs* 50-60. See also 7:65-72; 25:123-140 and 46:21-26.

3. See Q. 7:73-79; 11:61-68; 24:141-159; 27:45-53.

4. *First Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 1913-1936, VIII, p. 736.

5. Qaḥṭân was the son of 'Âbir, son of Shâlikh, son of Arfakhshad, son of Sâm, son of Nûḥ (p.b.h.).

these Qahtanite Arabs. The Qur'ân makes special mention of the Sabaeans.[1]

Since time immemorial, however, many Qahtanite Arabs had migrated from their original habitat and spread over all parts of the Arabian peninsula. More lately the process of migration received an increased impetus due to the first bursting of the Dam of Ma'rib and the Roman displacement of the Arabs in the maritime trade in the first century A.C. Of those who thus migrated from time to time mention may by made of the tribe of *Azd*. One branch of this tribe, Banû Tha'labah ibn 'Amr, first settled in the region of Al-Tha'labiyyah but subsequently moved on to Madina. Their descendants were the famous 'Aws and Khazraj tribes who in the course of time became the Helpers (*anṣâr*) of the Prophet. Another branch of the *Azd* tribe, Banû Ḥârithah ibn 'Amr settled in the Hijaz and came to be better known as Banû Khuzâ'ah. They in the course of time occupied Makka displacing its earlier inhabitants, Banû Jurhum. Another important Qahtanite tribe, Banû Lakhm, settled in Al-Ḥîrah (modern Kufa region in Iraq) where they founded a buffer state between Arabia and the Persian Empire (roughly 200-602 A.C.). Another powerful tribe, Banû Ghassân, settled in lower Syria and founded the Ghassanid kingdom there, playing a similar role of a buffer state between the Byzantine Empire and Arabia. The Ghassanid state came to an end on account of the Sasanid Khusraw Parwez's capture of the region, including Damascus and Jerusalem, in 613-614 A.C.

Two other powerful Qahtanite tribes who settled in Arabia were Banû Ṭayyi' and Banû Kindah. The former settled in north Arabia, in the region between the 'A'a and Salma mountains, which are for that reason better known as the Ṭayyi' Mountains. The famous Ḥâtim al-Ṭayyi' belonged to this tribe. Banû Kindah, on the other hand, settled in central Arabia and established a kingdom there. Their rulers, unlike the others, bore the title of king (*malik*).

The Naturalized Arabs, *al-'Arab al-Musta'ribah*, were the descendants of Prophet Ibrâhîm through his eldest son Prophet Ismâ'îl (p.b.t.). It must not be supposed that they were later in coming to Arabia than the above mentioned Qahtanite tribes from the south. In fact Prophet Ismâ'îl and his mother settled at Makka long before the dispersal of the above mentioned Qahtanite tribes in different parts of Arabia. It should also be noted that

1. *Sûrah* 34 of the Qur'ân is named after them. See specially its *'âyahs* 15-21. See also 27:22.

Prophet Ibrâhîm was no non-Arab or non-Semitic person. He descended from the same Semitic Arabs who had long previously migrated and settled in the Tigris-Euphrates valley (Babylonia). In that sense his coming to Makka and settling his son and wife there was a sort of return to the original home of his ancestors. The descendants of Ismâ'îl are called "naturalized Arabs" not really because they were originally non-Semitic outsiders, but mainly because their ancestors had long before left the land.

II. THE KA'BA AND THE ABRAHAMIC TRADITION

The story of Prophet Ibrâhîm's migration from Babylonia to Syria-Palestine (Kan'ân), then to Egypt, then his return to Palestine and subsequently his coming with his wife Hâjar and son Ismâ'îl to Makka is well-known. These epoch-making travels took place roughly at the beginning of the second millennium B.C. Ibrâhîm had at first called his own people to abandon the worship of idols and other objects like the heavenly bodies and to worship the One Only God.[1] They, however, instead of responding to his call, put him to various vexations and ultimately to the test of fire from which God protected and saved him.[2] Only his wife Sârah and nephew Lûṭ believed and accepted his call. Under God's directive[3] Ibrâhîm, accompanied by Sârah and Lûṭ first migrated to Hârân (in Syria) and then on to Kan'ân (Palestine). At both the places he preached God's message and called the people to worship Him alone. Next he travelled to Egypt where the reigning monarch initially designed evil against him but was subsequently attracted to him and respected him. The ruler presented Hâjar to Ibrâhîm and Sârah. Hâjar was originally a princess and queen to another ruler but was captured in a war by the Egyptian monarch.[4] With Hâjar Ibrâhîm returned to Palestine and subsequently married her. Ibrâhîm had hitherto no child. So he prayed to God for a son. God granted his prayer and gave him the good news that a forbearing son would be born to him.[5] As Hâjar became pregnant Sârah grew jealous of her; but God blessed her. According to the Old Testament an angel visited her and gave her the good tidings that she would give birth to the first son to Ibrâhîm and that she should name the son Ismâ'îl.[6] In due

1. Q. 6:74, 80-83; 19:41-50; 21:51-71; 26:70-82; 29:16-18, 24-25; 37:83-98.
2. Q. 21:68-70.
3. Q. 21:71.
4. Ibn Khaldûn, *Târîkh*, II /I / 79; Ibn Sa'd, I, 48, 49.
5. Q. 37:99-100.
6. Genesis 16:7-11.

course she gave birth to a son, the first-born to Ibrâhîm, and the child was named Ismâ'îl. Ibrâhîm was at that time 86 years old.

Till Ibrâhîm's return from Egypt Lûṭ had all along been with him. Then Lûṭ was called to Prophethood and was directed to preach to the people inhabiting the then prosperous region lying to the southeast of the Dead Sea. The sinful people rejected his repeated appeals to reform themselves and to obey Allah. Ultimately Allah destroyed the intransigent population and their habitat, saving Lûṭ and a few of his believing followers.[1] This happened some 12 or 13 years after the birth of Ismâ'îl. The scenes of destruction and devastation are still visible in the region.

After Ismâ'îl's birth Sârah grew all the more jealous of Hâjar so that Ibrâhîm found it necessary to separate her and the child from near Sârah. Under Allah's directive and guidance he travelled with Hâjar and Ismâ'îl all the way from Palestine to the valley of Makka and left the mother and the child, with some provisions and water, at the spot near which the Ka'ba stands. It was then an uninhabited place. Hâjar of course enquired of Ibrâhîm why he was leaving them there. In reply he said that he was doing so according to Allah's directive and desire. The virtuous and believing Hâjar willingly submitted to Allah's will, expressing her confidence that Allah would not then let them down.[2]

Allah of course did not let Hâjar and Ismâ'îl down. As the little amount of water with them was soon exhausted Hâjar went in search of water. She ran frantically between the nearby Ṣafâ and Marwâh hills in search of water. As she thus completed seven runs between the two hills, the angel Jibrîl appeared before her by Allah's comamnd and caused the well of Zamzam to gush forth from the ground for Hâjar and Ismâ'îl. The provision of this well for them was indeed the beginning of their peaceful existence there. For water in those days (as also subsequently) was the most valuable wealth in desert Arabia. Soon a Qaḥṭânî tribe of Yaman was passing by the region. Noticing that a bird was flying over the spot of Zamzam they correctly guessed that there was water there. They reached the spot and sought and obtained Hâjar's permission to settle there.[3] Thus the spot was settled and it

1. Q. 6:86:7:80-84; 11:77-83; 15:57-77; 21:74-75; 26:160-175; 27:54-58; 29:26, 28-35; 37:133-138; 51:31-37; 54:34-39; 66:10.

2. *Bukhârî*, No. 3364.

3. *Bukhârî*, no. 3365.

soon grew to be an impoprtant trading centre, lying conveniently on the trade route from Yaman to the north and vice-versa. Ismâ'îl grew up among the Jurhum tribe, learning the pure Arabic tongue from them. When grown up he successively married two ladies from the Jurhum tribe, the second wife being the daughter of Muḍâḍḍ ibn 'Amr, leader of the Jurhum tribe.

In the meantime Ibrâhîm continued to visit Makka from time to time to know about the well-being of his son and wife.[1] On one such occasion, when Ismâ'îl had reached the age of understanding, Ibrâhîm received Allah's command in dream to sacrifice his dear and only one son. He disclosed it to Ismâ'îl. The virtuous son of the virtuous father, who himself was to be a Prophet of Allah, Ismâ'îl unhesitatingly consented and asked his father to carry out Allah's behest. Accordingly Ibrâhîm took Ismâ'îl to a suitable spot[2], made him lie on the ground, face downward, and was about to strike his neck with knife when Allah's call reached Ibrâhîm saying that he had already passed the test and that he should instead sacrifice an animal.[3] The test was for both father and son and both had creditably passed it. It was as a reward for having passed this test that Allah further blessed Ibrâhîm and gave him the good tidings that He would favour him with another son by his first wife Sârah, though both he and she had grown quite old.[4] Thus another son, Isḥâq, was born to Ibrâhîm by Sârah when Ismâ'îl was about 14 years old.

On another occasion when Ibrâhîm visited Makka Allah bade him build a house for His worship.[5] Accordingly he built the Ka'ba, assisted by his son Ismâ'îl. As they raised the foundation they prayed to Allah to accept their good deed, to render them submissive to His will, to raise from among their progeny a people submissive to Allah and to raise from among them a Prophet who would purify them and recite unto them His scripture and directives.[6] Further they prayed Allah to make Makka and its vicinity a land of peace and security and to feed its people abundantly — "such of them as

1. *Ibid*

2. Some reports say it to be at Minâ; some others think it to be near the Marwâh hill. The Qur'ân specifically states that both father and son *submitted to Allah's will* (37:103, أسلما).

3. Q. 37:102-107.

4. Q. 37:112-113.

5. *Bukhârî*, no. 3365

6. Q. 2:127-129.

believe in Allah and the Last Day."[1] When the building of the Ka'ba was completed Allah commanded Ibrâhîm to proclaim to mankind the duty of pilgrimage to the House (Ka'ba).[2] So Ibrâhîm introduced the rite of pilgrimage to the Ka'ba.

The Qur'ân as well as the Bible state that Allah especially blessed Ibrâhîm and both his sons, Ismâ'îl and Isḥâq, intimating that their descendants would multiply into nations.[3] Indeed, it was according to the Divine plan that the two sons were settled in two different lands. Ibrâhîm lived long to see his sons grow into maturity, establishing their respective families. According to the Old Testament Ibrâhîm lived for 175 years and when he died both Ismâ'îl and Isḥâq together buried him.[4]

Ismâ'îl also lived long for 137 years and left behind him twelve sons from whom twelve tribes arose.[5] They and their descendants lived at Makka; but as their numbers increased they scattered over the other parts of Arabia. Of the tribes who arose out of the twelve sons of Ismâ'îl, those from the eldest two, Nâbat and Qaydar (Kedar of the Old Testament) became more prominent. The descendants of Nâbat migrated from Makka towards the north where, in the course of time, they founded the famous Nabatian Kingdom (sixth century B.C. to 105 A.C.) with Petra as its capital. The descendants of Qaydar continued to live at Makka and its vicinity for long till the time of 'Adnân, probably the 38th in descent from Qaydar. The descendants of 'Adnân through his son Ma'dd and grandson Nizâr multiplied so greatly that they were in the course of time divided into numerous tribes and spread over all parts of Arabia including Bahrayn and Iraq. Most of the tribes who subsequently attained prominence traced their decsent from 'Adnân and thus called themselves 'Adnânites. Such famous tribes as Taghlib, Ḥanîfah, Bakr ibn Wâ'il, Qays ibn 'Aylân, Sulaym, Hawâzin, Ghaṭafân, Tamîm, Ḥudhayl ibn Mudrikah, Asad ibn Khuzaymah, Thaqîf, and Quraysh (sons of Fihr ibn Mâlik ibn al-Naḍr ibn Kinânah) all traced their descent from 'Adnân and

1. Q. 2:126.

2. Q. 22:27.

3. Genesis 12:2; 16:10.

4. Genesis 25:7-9.

5. The old Testament, after mentioning the names of the twelve sons of Ismâ'îl, states: "These *are* the sons of Ishmael, and these *are* their names, by their towns, and by their castles; twelve princes according to their nations."—Genesis 25:16.

through him from Ismâ'îl and Ibrâhîm.

Indeed, this Abrahamic tradition was the most important and universal feature in the social life of the Arabs. It was the symbol of their unity and identity, despite their division into numerous independent tribes. It found expression in their practical life in various ways. Each and every tribe meticulously maintained their genealogy tracing it ultimately to Ismâ'îl and Ibrâhîm. They universally practised circumcision as an Abrahamic tradition (*sunnah*). All the peoples of all the tribes believed the Ka'ba to have been built by Ibrâhîm and they considered it as their spiritual centre. They even placed images of Ibrâhîm and Ismâ'îl along with other images, in the Ka'ba. In pursuance of the Abrahamic tradition all the Arabs used to perform pilgrimage to the Ka'ba and Makka, to make sacrifice of animals in connection with that rite, and to circumambulate the Ka'ba. And despite their relapse into gross idolatry they did not forget the name of Allah, Whom they regarded as the Supreme Lord — a faint remnant of monotheism which Ibrâhîm and Ismâ'îl had taught. And most imporant of all, when the Prophet asked them, through the Qur'ânic text, to revert to the true faith of their forefather Ibrâhîm (*millata 'abîkum Ibrâhîm*) they did not controvert him on this point of their ancestry going back to Ibrâhîm, although they were only too ready to oppose the Prophet on all conceivable grounds. This is worth emphasizing; for nothing was more obnoxious to an Arab than to ascribe a false or imaginary ancestry to him.

III. MAKKA AND ARABIA PRIOR TO THE RISE OF ISLAM

After the death of Prophet Ismâ'îl his descendants remained in control of the affairs of Makka for some time. Then their maternal relatives, Banû Jurhum, snatched power from them and continued to rule Makka for several centuries. They were then defeated and ousted from Makka by Banû Khuzâ'ah in alliance with Banû Bakr ibn 'Abd Manât ibn Kinânah. At the time of their leaving Makka Banû Jurhum destroyed the Zamzam well by covering it with earth and burying on the spot some of their arms and armour and two golden gazelles. The well thus remained covered and unspotted for a long time.

Banû Khuzâ'ah remained at the helm of affairs for another long period of several centuries. Ultimately Quṣayy ibn Kilâb of the Quraysh tribe, who belonged to the main branch of the descendants of Prophet Ismâ'îl, ousted Banû Khuzâ'ah from Makka, with the assistance of Banû Kinânah. This

event took place some two centuries before the birth of the Prophet. Quṣayy gathered all the Quraysh people under his banner and settled them in and around Makka. He also assumed control of all the traditional functions relating to the administration of Makka and the Ka'ba. These functions were mainly:

(1) *Al-Ḥijâbah*, i.e., possession of the key of the Ka'ba and being in charge of its upkeep.

(2) *Al-Siqâyah*, i.e., being in charge of supplying water to the pilgrims at the time of *ḥajj* and also, subsequently, the right to administer the well

(3) *Al-Rifâdah*, i.e., being in charge of supplying provisions to and feeding the pilgrims during the *ḥajj* season.

(4) *Al-Nadwah*, i.e., the right to convene the consultative council of the tribe to discuss and decide upon the affairs of civic life.

(5) *Al-Liwâ'*, i.e., command in war and right to bear the standard of the tribe.

Quṣayy used to exercise all these functions assisted by his four sons. He also built a house for tribal consultation near the Ka'ba, called *Dâr al-Nadwah*, setting its door towards the Ka'ba. All matters of peace and war and of civil administration of Makka were discussed and decisions taken on them in the *Dâr al-Nadwah*. The chief of each clan spoke on behalf of his clan. Decisions in the council were adopted by unanimity. At the time of *ḥajj* Quṣayy used to call upon all the Quraysh to contribute towards the expenses of providing food, water and meals for the pilgrims, especially during their stay at Minâ, stressing that they were the guests of Allah. The practice thus introduced by Quṣayy continued to be followed even after the establishment of Islam.

Quṣayy had four sons, 'Abd al-Dâr, 'Abd Manâf, 'Abd al-'Uzzâ and 'Abd. of these four sons the second, 'Abd Manâf, was a natural leader of men. He became prominent and was respected by all even during the lifetime of his father Quṣayy. The latter, however, selected his eldest son, 'Abd al-Dâr, to succeed to all the above mentioned functions of the administration of Makka and the Ka'ba.[1] All the four sons accepted Quṣayy's decision. Accordingly, after his death, 'Abd al-Dâr exercised those functions. After his

1. Ibn Hishâm, I., 129-130.

death, however, differences arose between his sons (Banû 'Abd al-Dâr) and those of 'Abd Manâf (Banû 'Abd Manâf). The Quraysh clans were divided on the issue — one group supporting the claims of Banû 'Abd Manâf, the others supporting Banû 'Abd al-Dâr. Banû 'Abd Manâf were supported by Banû Asad ibn 'Abd al-'Uzzâ ibn Quṣayy, Banû Zuhrah ibn Kilâb, Banû Taym ibn Murrah ibn Kilâb, and Banû al-Ḥârith ibn Fihr ibn Mâlik ibn al-Naḍr. Banû 'Abd al-Dâr, on the other hand, were supported by Banû Makhzûm ibn Yaqaẓah ibn Murrah, Banû Sahm ibn 'Amr ibn Huṣayṣ ibn Ka'b, Banû Jumaḥ ibn 'Amr ibn Huṣayṣ ibn Ka'b and Banû 'Adiyy ibn Ka'b. The two groups formed two rival alliances — the former being called *Al-Muṭayyabûn* because of their having reportedly dipped their hands in a bowl-ful of scent and thus vowed to support Banû 'Abd Manâf; while the other group came to be known as *Al-Aḥlâf*, or the Confederates, because they entered into a formal alliance, *ḥilf,* for supporting Banû 'Abd al-Dâr.[1] The two rival groups were about to engage themselves in an armed conflict over the issue when good sense prevailed and a compromise was worked out. According to the compromise, Banû 'Abd Manâf were given the two functions of *Al-Siqâyah* and *Al-Rifâdah*, while the three other functions of *Al-Ḥijâbah*, *Al-Nadwah* and *Al-Liwâ'* remained with Banû 'Abd al-Dâr. This arrangement continued to be followed till the establishment of Islam.

The functions of *Al-Siqâyah* and *Al-Rifâdah* thus given to Banû 'Abd Manâf were exercised by 'Abd Manâf's second son Hâshim because his elder brother, 'Abd Shams, was of straitened means and was almost always out on trade travels. Hâshim, like his father, was a man of parts and became the natural spokesman of the Quraysh in their international relations. He concluded a series of trade treaties with the Byzantie authorities and Abyssinia. As a result the commercial operations of the Quraysh expanded greatly in both the north and the south, particularly in Syria and Abyssinia. He also introduced the system of two principal yearly trade travels to foreign lands, one in the winter and the other in the summer. Hâshim died at Ghaza in the course of one such trade travels.

The functions of *Al-Siqâyah* and *Al-Rifâdah* then devolved on Hâshim's younger brother Al-Muṭṭalib ibn 'Abd Manâf. Like his brother Al-Muṭṭalib also was endowed with the qualities of head and heart. The Quraysh used to call him *Al-Fayḍ* on account of his generosity and outstanding personality.

1. *Ibid.*, 131-132.

After his death the charge of *Al-Siqâyah* and *Al-Rifâdah* passed on to Hâshim's son, 'Abd al-Mu ṭṭalib, the grandfather of the Prophet.

'Abd al-Muṭṭalib had a long life and exercised the two functions for more than half a century. His most outstanding achievement was the re-excavation and restoration of the Zamzam Well. Since its destruction and burial by Banû Jurhum it had remained untapped and people had lost its trace. In fact the predecessors of the Quraysh had placed the statues of two of their gods and goddesses, 'Isâf and Nâ'ila, on the spot where they and their successors used to sacrifice their animals for their gods and goddesses. It is reported that 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib was commanded in dreams over three consecutive nights to re-excavate the well and was informed about its location. Accordingly he started digging up the spot, assisted by his then only son Al-Ḥârith. As he dug down to some depth he found the arms and armour and also the two golden gazelles buried there by Banû Jurhum. Digging further down he struck the main stone with which the mouth of the well had been covered. He cried out of joy and praised Allah for his success. The Quraysh had initially raised some objection to his disturbing their sacrificing spot; but when they saw that 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib had rightly spotted the well, they claimed to have a share in it saying that it actually belonged to their common ancestor Ismâ'îl. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib did not agree to the proposal saying that he alone had been divinely selected for restoring and administering the well. The matter was ultimately settled either by the usual process of divination by arrows or by drawing lots which fell in 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib's favour. The Quraysh peacefully allowed the latter to own and administer the well. He fixed the two golden gazelles at the door of the Ka'ba. This is the first recorded instance of decorating the Ka'ba door with gold.[1]

The discovery and re-excavation of the Zamzam well heightened the prestige and influence of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib. The possession of this perennial source of water also greatly facilitated his performing the functions of *Al-Siqâyah* and *Al-Rifâdah*. Indeed during 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib's time these two functions became the most important aspects of the civic life of Makka. Moreover his exercise of these functions for more than half a century made him well known throughout Arabia and to all the Arab tribes and visitors to Makka. And by virtue of his age, wisdom and wealth he became the virtual chief of the Quraysh in both their internal and external affairs.

1. *Ibid.*, 142-147.

Besides the re-exacavtion of the Zamzam well, the other notable event durring 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib's time was the invasion of Makka by Abrahah, the Abyssinian governor of Yaman. He had built an imposing cathedral at Ṣan'â', called *Al-Qullays* to which he determined to divert the pilgrimage and trade of the Arabs. He organized a huge army well equipped with horses and elephants and, under the pretext of his cathedral having been desecrated by an Arab, led an expedition against Makka with a view to destroying the Ka'ba. Some Arab tribes attempted to resist him on the way; but they all were defeated. Coming by way of Ṭâ'if he ultimately reached the vicinity of Makka with his army and elephants, and plundered and captured whatever he got in the outskirts of the city, including two hundred camels belonging to 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib. Abrahah then sent his emissary to the city to tell its "chief" that he (Abrahah) had no intention to fight and kill its people but had come only to dismantle the Ka'ba. If, therefore, they submitted peacefully, they would be spared their lives. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib had already had consultations with the chiefs of the other clans and it had been decided that there was no use opposing the irresistible forces of Abrahah. When the latter's emissary came to the city everyone pointed out to 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib as the chief whom to talk to. When therefore the emissary met 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib he informed him that the Quraysh had no intention to fight Abrahah and were rather desirous of a peaceful settlement. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib was therefore invited to see Abrahah in his camp. Accompanied by some of his sons and a couple of other leaders he went with the emissary to Abrahah's camp. It is reported that the latter was so impressed by the personality and disposition of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib that he came down from his throne and sat with the latter on a seat laid on the floor. He then asked 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib to say what he had to say. The latter asked for his two hundred camels to be returned to him. Abrahah expressed his surprise and disappointment, saying that he had expected the Quraysh leader to speak to him about the fate of the Ka'ba and to entreat him to spare it. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib calmly replied that he was the owner only of the camels, not of the Ka'ba which had its Lord and Protector Who, if He so willed, would see to its safety and protection. Intoxicated by the superiority of his forces Abrahah arrogantly replied that the Lord of the Ka'ba would be of no avail against his forces. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib only remarked that that was for him (Abrahah) and the Lord to see. Thus finishing his talk with Abrahah 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib returned to the city and advised the Quraysh people to desert their homes and to take shelter on mountain tops and in the vales to

see what Abrahah would do to the Ka'ba. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib himself, before leaving his home, went to the Ka'ba and then by touching its door prayed and beseeched the Lord to protect His House.[1]

The Lord did indeed intervene to save the Ka'ba. As Abrahah was about to sweep down on the city, a huge flock of birds (*'abâbîl*) appeared in the sky, each with *sijjîl* stones (brimstones) in its bills and claws, which they rained down upon Abrahah's army. Everyone who was struck by the stone died, his body decomposing quickly. The invading army was thus almost totally annihilated. Abrahah himself managed to escape with his elephant and returned to his capital only to die shortly afterwards due to the effect of having been hit by the *sijjîl* stone. This memorable and miraculous event took place in the very year in which the Prophet was born (570-571 A.C.); and it is graphically described in *sûrah* 105 (*al-Fîl*) of the Qur'ân.[2]

* * *

It would be clear from the above brief survey that Makka was a settlement at least two and a half millenia old when the Prophet was born and its civic life resembled more or less that of the ancient Greek city-state. Since the beginning of its existence its inhabitants lived mainly on trade and commerce. Neither Banû Jurhum and the descendants of Ismâ'îl, the original settlers, nor the succeeding settlers were nomads when they first took possession of Makka. Even the Quraysh, before their capture of it, were no nomads but were settled at neighbouring areas and carried on trade and commerce. It was Makka's religio-commercial importance due to the existence of the Ka'ba in it and its situation on the then international trade route that made it a bone of contention between the various tribes who srtove to possess and control it. For, it was otherwise only a barren and hilly tract without any agricultural prospects or other economic attractions. At all events, it would be a mistake to suppose that Makka, and for that matter the Quraysh, had emerged only lately from a nomadic to a settled and mercantile economy shortly before or on the eve of the rise of Islam.

In fact since the emergence of Arabia into the light of history its demography has been charactlerized by a duality. We find the existence of settled

1. *Ibid.*, 48-52.

2. *Ibid.*, 49-52. The other references in the Qur'ân to *sijjîl* stones having been rained down upon a sinful people are in 11:82 and 15:74, both of which relate to the punishment of the people of Prophet Lûṭ (p.b.h.).

and relatively civilized communities (*ḥaḍar*) side by side with "nomadic" and wandering groups (*badw*). Not to speak of such ancient and well-known states as the Minaean (1200 B.C.- 600 B.C.), the Sabaean (950 B.C.-115 B.C.), the Qaṭabân (100 B.C.-115 A.C.), the Ḥaḍramaut (180 B.C.-300 A.C.) and the Himyarite (115-525 A.C.) kingdoms in the south, and the Nabataean (400 B.C.-106 A.C.), The Ghassânid (271-630 A.C.) and the Lakhmid (271-628 A.C.) states in the north, many important tribes were settled folks possessing and controlling specific territories, and having their capitals and fortresses. Of such tribes mention may be made of Banû Quḍâ'ah (north-western Arabia), Banû Kalb (northern Arabia), Banû Rabî'ah and Banû Bakr ibn Wâ'il (northeastern Arabia), Banû Ṭayy' (north-central Arabia), Banû Ḥanîfah (eastern Arabia, Al-Yamâmah), Bannû Kindah (central Arabia), Banû Hawâzin and Banû Sulaym (central and south-central Arabia), Banû Khuzâ'ah and Banû Ghifâr (western Arabia between Makka and Madina). The rulers of Banû Kindah, as already mentioned, bore the title of "King". Banû Bakr ibn Wâ'il sometimes measured strength with the Persian empire. Banû Ḥanîfah, as is well known, offered the toughest resistance to Islam after the Prophet's death. There were other settled tribes like the 'Aws and the Khazraj at Yathrib (Madina), Banû Thaqîf at Ṭâ'if, Banû 'Abs in north Arabia, Banû Kinânah in western Arabia, Banû Ghaṭafân in north Arabia and Banû al-Daws in south Arabia. Prior to his migration to Madina the Prophet had sought help and support from such settled and strongly entrenched tribes,[1] and not really from the nomadic and wandering tribes. Ṭufayl ibn 'Amr of al-Daws tribe had indeed asked the Prophet, when his position at Makka became critical, to leave it and to take shelter in the strong fortress of that tribe.[2] The Prophet, however, declined to do so. Places like Makka, Jedda, Ṭâ'if, Yathrib (Madina), Khaybar, Taymâ', Tabûk, Fadak, Dumat al-Jandal, etc., were all long-standing settlements prior to the rise of Islam. The political spectacle of pre-Islamic Arabia resembled in a large measure that of ancient India — a multiplicity of small and petty states and political entities, with the difference that in Arabia, besides the tribal settlements and jurisdictions, there were vast areas of "no man's lands" where the nomadic tribes found full play for pasture, preying on or trading with one another and, above all, for wandering from place to place in quest of the above mentioned

1. See *infra*, ch. XXXV.
2. *Infra*, Ch. XXXV, sec.II.

objectives.

The social system in respect of both the settled and nomadic sections of the population was based on 'tribe'. A considerably large group of people tracing their descent from a common and distant ancestor constituted a tribe. It was naturally composed of a number of 'clans', each clan being a group of closely related families having a common ancestor. The tribe and clan entities and distinctions were scrupulously maintained. One incidence of this system was the emphasis on the preservation of tribal, clan and family genealogies. It was not uncommon even for an ordinary individual to remember his genealogy up to the 20th or 25th of his ancestors. A respectable person was expected to tell his name by mentioning five to ten of his ancestors, such as 'Abd Allah, son of...., son of...., etc.[1] The importance attached to genealogy led to the rise of a class of specialists called *nussâb* who collected, preserved and transmitted the genealogies of tribes, clans and families. 'Abû Bakr (r.a) was one such *nussâb* at Makka. The tribe, clan and family were patriarchal, though there are a very few references to matrilineal families.

The tribe occupied the position of a "state" in modern times. An individual's identity, his rights and duties and, above all, his safety and security, were all linked with the tribe. A person disowned by or expelled from his tribe or clan was like a "stateless person". He could be wronged, captured or killed with impunity by anyone. Conversely, a wrong done to an individual was invariably treated as an offence to his tribe or clan as a whole; and if the offender belonged to another tribe or clan, that tribe or clan was collectively held responsible for the offence. Often the killing of one person by a person of another tribe led to prolonged "blood feuds" between the two tribes and their allies. An individual's qualities and attainments were counted as points of honour for his tribe or clan, while the clan's or tribe's achievements were reflected into the status and prestige of the individual. An outsider could be integrated into a tribe or clan as an ally (*ḥalîf*) or as a protected person (*mawlâ*). The tribe was, however, in no way "totalitarian"; nor were its members merely a collection of "labour" or "man-power". Just as the 'clan' and its constituents, the 'families', had individual existence, so a person enjoyed a good deal of freedom and individualism. He owned, bequeathed and succeeded to properties, married and established his own family, acted according to his own likes and dislikes so long as his acts did not infringe

1. The practice continued even after the establishment of Islam.

the rights of others, and freely pursued his own vocation or profession. Just as, for instance, the winning of a gold medal in modern olympics by an individual is considered a distinction for himself as well for his state or nation, similarly an individual's attainments, physical or intellectual, constituted laurels for himself as well as for his clan or tribe. Similarly, just as a modern citizen is duty-bound to defend and fight for his state or nation, so a member of a tribe was duty-bound to defend and fight for his tribe or clan. Even then, if he so elected, he could at times remain neutral and avoid joining his tribe's war. 'Abd Allah ibn 'Ubayy's not joining his tribe in the Bu'âth war between the Aws and the Khazraj of Madina is an instance in point.

Leadership of the tribe was determined on the basis of nobility in birth, seniority in age, wisdom and personal qualities. The tribal leader, however, was no despot. Affairs of the tribe generally, and questions of war and peace particularly, were decided in consultation with the clan chiefs. Similarly, civic and administrative functions were distributed among the various clans of a tribe.

Within the tribe and outside it an individual's stature was gauged by the extent of his *murû'ah*, which term bore almost the same signification as that of 'chivalry' in medieval Europe. Generally, *murû'ah* found expression through bravery in battle, hospitality even in poverty, fidelity even at the risk of one's life and eloquence. A person who excelled in all these qualities was called *Kâmil* or Perfect. Suwayd ibn Ṣâmit of Banû 'Awf at Madina was one such *Kâmil*.[1] Eloquence found expression through poetry. A poet was held in esteem by his tribe and was in a sense its spokesman. Through his poetry the poet usually idealized and glorified his tribe and clan, sung their victories, expressed their joy and gave vent to their sorrows, ethos and attitudes in happiness and adversity. The tribal poets used to meet in rivalry and recited their choicest productions at the fair of 'Ukâẓ. The Arabs were connoisseures of poetry. The best compositions were awarded appropriate prizes and the very distinctive ones are said to have been written in golden letters and hung on the Ka'ba walls. These were as such called *mu'allaqât* or the "Suspended ones". The Ka'ba was thus not only a common religious centre for the Arabs, it was a point of their intellectual and literary integration as well. During the couple of centuries before the rise of Islam, the composi-

1. Ibn Hishâm, I, 425-426.

tions of only ten poets found place in the *mu'allaqât*.[1]

As in the case of the existence of small and petty states in any given country in ancient times, so in Arabia, the tribes were often at war with one another. Tribal pride, personal rivalries, the desire of one tribe to aggrandize at the cost of another tribe, blood feuds, quarrels over the possession of oases, wells, pastures and fertile lands and, at times, diplomacy and machinations by the neighbouring Byzantine and Persian empires for their respective imperial interests generally lay at the root of such internecine wars. The Arabs cherished the memory of the most important conflicts as the "Days" of their glory and bravery—*'Ayyâm al-'Arab*. Of such memorable "Days" mention may be made of the "Day of Basûs" between Banû Taghlib and Banû Bakr, the "Days of Dâḥis and al-Ghabrâ'" between Banû 'Abs and Banû Dhubyân (both in the late fifth century A.C.), the "Days of Fijâr" between the Quraysh and Banû Kinânah on the one hand and Banû Hawâzin on the other (late sixth century[2]), the "Day of Dhû Qâr" between Banû Bakr ibn Wâ'il and the Persian empire (610 A.C.) and the "Day of Bu'âth" between the 'Aws and the Khazraj of Madina (617-618 A.C.).[3] Such wars were fought more with a view to establishing the superiority and heroism of the one party over its opponent than for exterminating the latter. Often not much actual blood was shed, though the conflict and hostilities might be prolonged over years or generations. Sometimes peace was concluded by the one combatant tribe paying its opponent blood-money for the surplus of its dead.

In line with the two-fold divisions of the population their economic life generally followed two distinct patterns. The settled people carried on trade

1. These poets were: (1) Ṭarafa ibn al-'Abd of Banû Bakr (d. 500 A.C.), (2) Imru' al-Qays, grandson of King Ḥârith of Banû Kindah (d. 540 A.C.), (3) 'Ubayd ibn al-Abraṣ (d. 555 A.C.), (4) Al-Ḥârith ibn Ḥilliza of Banû Bakr (d. 580 A.C.), (5) 'Amr ibn Kulthûm of Banû Taghlib (d. 600 A.C.), (6) Al-Nâbighah al-Dhubyânî of Banû Dhubyân (d. 604 A.C.), (7) 'Antara ibn al-Shaddâd of Banû 'Abs (d. 615 A.C), (8) Zuhayr ibn 'Abî Sulma of Banû Muzayna (d. 615 A.C.), (9) Al-'A'sha (Maymûn ibn Qays, d. 629 A.C.) and (10) Labîd ibn Rabî'ah of Banû 'Âmir ibn Ṣa'ṣa'ah (d. 662 A.C.) The last named embraced Islam and gave up poetry. See for a short discussion on them R.A. Nocholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs*, Cambridge, 1988 edn., pp. 103-125.

2. See *infra*, Ch.VII, sec.III.

3. See *infra*, Ch.XXXV, sec.III. One of the best modern consolidated accounts of most of these *'ayyâm* is Muḥammad Aḥmad Jâd al-Mawlâ Bik and others, *'Ayyâm al-'Arab Fî al-Jâhiliyyah*, Cairo, n.d.

and commerce and also engaged themselves in agriculture, specially those in fertile spots like Ṭâ'if and Madina. The nomadic tribes, on the other hand, lived mainly on the rearing of the sheep, the goat and the camel, for which purpose they moved from place to place in search of pastures and water. This distinction is, however, true only to a certain extent. Settled peoples like those at Makka and Ṭâ'if also engaged themselves in sheep and camel breeding; while the nomadic tribes similarly participated in both the internal and external trade of the land. In fact they depended for much of the necessaries of life on the traders of the settlements. Also the nomadic tribes themselves carried their wares, both their own products as well as imported goods, from place to place, particularly to the annual fairs. Conversely, the traders of the settlements depended on the cooperation of the nomadic tribes for the safe passage of the trade caravans through their respective jurisdictions. Hâshim ibn 'Abd Manâf, who concluded a series of trade treaties with the Byzantine and Abyssinian authorities, also concluded a series of agreements with a number of the nomadic tribes for the same purpose.[1] Even the sending of trade caravans from distant places to the fairs like that at 'Ukâẓ needed the "guarantee" of some influential local individual. The rivalry of two such local men for standing surety for a caravan from Ḥîra to the 'Ukâẓ fair lay at the root of the last Fijâr war.[2] Makka, by virtue of its being also a religious and inviolate place, was a sort of "free market" where merchants from distant lands used to come without the need for such formal guarantee. Still, the spoliation of a Yamani trader by a Makkan leader, Al-'Âṣ ibn Wâ'il of Banû Sahm, led to the formation of the *Ḥilf al-Fuḍûl*[3] in order to prevent the recurrence of such events.

In fact the paucity of Arabia's agricultural products and its climatic conditions on the one hand, and its geographical situation in relation to the outer world, on the other, turned its inhabitants into natural traders. It is well-known how, since antiquity, its inhabitants acted as middlemen of the trade between the east and the west and carried on both overland and sea-borne commerce with Asia, Africa and Europe. In the first century A.C. the Arabs were of course displaced by the Romans in the domain of the maritime trade in the Mediterranean and the Red Sea; but they retained control of the over-

1. Ibn Sa'd I, 78.
2. *Infra*, Ch.VII, sec.III.
3. *Infra*, Ch.VII, sec.IV.

land carrying trade from Asia and Africa to the Byzantine and the Persian empires and vice-versa.

Makka, besides being a religious and intellectual centre of the Arabs thrived as a commercial centre too. The sources make it amply clear that before the rise of Islam the Makkan leaders were all big businessmen and merchants leading their trade caravans to Yaman and Abyssinia in the south and Syria and Ḥîra-Persia in the north. The Prophet himself, before his call to Prophethood, carried on trade and commerce. The fact of his leading Khadîjah's (r.a.) trade caravan to Syria when he was about twenty-five years old is well-known. Makka consisted of several big markets in accordance with the country of origin of the goods available there. For instance, there was a *Dâr Miṣr* or Egyptian market where wares from Egypt were stocked and distributed.[1]

In pre-Islamic Arabia commerce went hand in hand with religion. The annual pilgrimage to the Ka'ba and Makka provided an occasion for the Arabs to throng there with their wares and products, to participate in a sort of national féte and to conduct business in no small scale. The four holy months were utilized for the same purpose and for holding the great annual fairs at 'Ukâẓ, Majannah and Dhû al-Majâz. The first named fair continued for twenty days and was attended with great socio-intellectual festivities and exhibition and exchange of wares and products. Trade caravans from distant places used to come to that fair. As will be seen presently, besides the Ka'ba at Makka, the Arabs had established a number of subsidiary shrines around different idols at other places, such as the shrine of Al-Lât at Ṭâ'if, the shrine of Al-'Uzzâ at Nakhla and that of Manât at Qudayd. These places also grew as religious and commercial centres and were visited by the tribes for religious and commercial purposes at appropriate seasons. As among the Jews so among the pre-Islamic Arabs usury was in vogue. There are instances of the Makkan and the Ṭâ'ifian leaders' lending and borrowing money at interest. Islam abolished usury and directed the Muslims of the time to give up what was due as interest on their capital.[2]

The chief articles of food consisted of the flesh of camel, goat and sheep, milk of all these three animals and, above all, dates. Milk and dates were the usual diet. Dates were (and still are) produced in abundance in different parts

1. Al-Azrakî, II, 263.
2. Q. 2:275-279; 3:130; 30:39.

of the peninsula, some one hundred varieties being produced around Madina alone. Other agricultural products included wheat, barley, millet at some places, the frankincense tree in Yaman, gum-arabic in the 'Asîr region, and grapes, pomegranates, apples, apricots and melons at fertile spots like Ṭâ'if. The Prophet, when returning from his mission to Ṭâ'if, rested in a vine-yard in its outskirt belonging to two Makkan leaders, 'Utbah and Shaybah, sons of Rabî'ah.[1] Some rice was produced in Oman and Al-Ḥasa. The English word "rice" is in fact a corruption of the Arabic *ruzz*. The Qur'ân refers to the pre-Islamic Arabs' practice of earmarking a portion of their expected crops and cattle (*al-ḥarth wa al-'an'âm*) for their gods and another (usually a very negligible one) for Allah.[2] Of the domestic animals, besides the camel, the goat and the sheep, special mention should be made of the horse. The Arabian horse was (and still is) noted for its pure breed and high quality. The camel was, however, the most important and the most useful animal. Besides providing the Arab with meat and milk for his food, hide for his coverings and tents, it was his chief vehicle for transportation through the inhospitable desert. It is so created that it can go through the desert for about twenty-five days in winter and about five days in summer without taking water. Its bodily construction is also designed to withstand simoons and sand-stroms. The Qur'ân draws attention to this remarkable creation of Allah's, along with His other remarkable creations[3] The Arab's wealth was counted in terms of the number of camels he owned. The dowry of a bride was fixed, the price of blood was paid and many other transactions were carried out in terms of camels, although coins (*dînâr*, *dirham*) were not unknown and were in fact very much used in trade and financial transactions. The Arabic language contains about a thousand terms for camels of various breeds and age.

IV. THE SOCIO-RELIGIOUS CONDITION: *JÂHILIYYAH*

The dual nature of the population and the dual aspects (agricultural and commercial) of their economic life seem to be matched by a dualism in the Arabs' religious beliefs and practices prior to the rise of Islam. The core of their religious beliefs and practices was characterized by unmistakable traces of the Abrahamic tradition. No other people of the time or subsequently so

1. See *Infra*, Ch. XXXV, sec.I.
2. Q. 6:136.
3. Q. 88:17.

well remembered the Abrahamic tradition and so closely performed the Abrahamic rites as did the Arabs. Yet, at the same time, they had succumbed to polytheism and idolatry with all its concomitant usages and superstitions.

For a long time indeed the descendents of Ismâ'îl continued to follow the faith and rites in their original forms as introduced by him and his father. With the passage of centuries, however, they gradually deviated from the original faith and succumbed to the natural tendency of the crude and unsophisticated mind to find an easily approachable god for support in times of distress and for redress of wrong, to the tendency to idialize a hero or ancestor, to the sense of helplessness in the face of the forces of nature and, above all, to the influence of the practice of those who were regarded as superior, intellectually, physically or materially. The "civilised" peoples who surrounded the Arabs in the past as well as contemporaneously were all engrossed in polytheism in some form or other. Wherever the pre-Islamic Arabs turned, as Ismâ'îl R. al Fârûqî states, they "saw the transcendence of God violated. Those Arabs who inclined in that direction became bolder by the example of their neighbours. It was their Byzantine Christian neighbours who sold them the human statues of the Ka'bah."[1]

Polytheism was introduced at Makka after its occupation by Banû Khuzâ'ah, particularly by their leader 'Amr ibn Luḥayy.[2] According to Ibn Hishâm 'Amr once went to Syria where he observed the people worshipping idols. He enquired of them of the reasons for their doing so and they replied that they did so because those idols caused the rains to fall for them and victory to attend them as they prayed to the idols for these things. 'Amr was impressed and asked them whether they would give him one for his people to worship it. Accordingly they gave him the idol of Hubal which he brought to Makka, placed it near the Ka'ba and asked his people to worship it. As they considered him their leader and wise man they started worshipping the idol.[3]

1. Ismâ'îl R. al-Fârûqî and Lois Lamyâ' al-Fârûqî, *The Cultural Atlas of Islam*, New York, 1986, p. 63.

2. *Bukhârî*, nos., 3521, 4623-4624; *Muslim*, no. 2856; *Musnad*, II, 275-276; III, 318, 353, 374; V, 137.

3. Ibn Hishâm, I, 77. According to Ibn al-Kalbî, 'Amr once fell seriously ill and was told by someone that if he took bath in a special spring in Syria he would be cured. So he went there, took bath in that spring and was cured. As he observed the people there worshipping =

The story illustrates the fact that polytheism found its way among the descendants of Ismâ'îl from their neighbours and others. A modern scholar, giving support to the story, states that even the Arabic word for idol, *ṣanam*, "is clearly an adaptation of Aramaic *sĕlĕm*."[1]

According to another report 'Amr ibn Luḥayy introduced also the worship of the images of *Wadd*, *Suwâ'*, *Yaghûth*, *Ya'ûq* and *Nasr*, the gods of Prophet Nûḥ's unbelieving people. It is said that a *jinni* informed 'Amr that the images of those gods were to be found at a certain place at Jedda and asked him to bring them from thence and to worship them. Accordingly, he went to Jedda, found the images at the place indicated, brought them to Makka and asked the people to start worshipping them.[2] These gods were indeed worshipped by Prophet Nûḥ's people, as the Qur'ân clearly states.[3] They represented certain cults relating to astral worship or worship of the forces of nature or deification of some human qualities, prevalent in ancient Assyria and Babylonia, the land of Nûḥ's people.[4] A report attributed to Ibn 'Abbâs (r.a.) says that these names were originally borne by some prominent persons among the people of Nûḥ who subsequently idealized and idolized them.[5] Once again, these reports emphasize, on the one hand, how the descendants of Ismâ'îl gradually succumbed to the polytheism of their predecessors and others and, on the other, the role of 'Amr ibn Luḥayy in the process.

Once introduced, however, polytheism spread among the Arabs in various shapes and forms. Ibn Isḥâq gives an explanation of the spread of stone worship thus. He says that when the descendants of Ismâ'îl were for various reasons obliged to disperse from Makka, each group, as they left it, took with them a stone from the sacred precincts as souvenir and memento of the Ka'ba. They placed those stones at suitable spots in their new domiciles, circumambulated them as they used to circumambulate the Ka'ba and treated

= idols he asked them the reason for their doing so, etc. Ibn al-Kalbî, *Kitâb al-Aṣnâm*, ed. Aḥmad Zakî Pâshâ, Cairo, 1343 / 1924, p. 8.

1. P.K. Hitti, *A History of the Arabs*, 1986 reprint, p. 100 and n.2

2. Ibn Ḥajar, *Fatḥ al-Bârî*, VI, 634.

3. Q. 71:23.

4. See for a discussion the *First Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 1913-1936, I, 379-380; A. Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur'ân Text Translation and Commentary*, Islamic Foundation, Leicester, 1975, pp. 1619-1623 (Appendix XIII to *Sûrah* 71).

5. *Bukhârî*, no. 4920.

them with various marks of reverence. Gradually their succeeding generations began to worship not only those stones but any stone that especially impressed them. Thus they forgot the original Abrahamic religion and degenerated into stone and image worship.[1]

Ultimately each and every tribe and clan, in fact every family, had their special idol to worship. On the eve of the Prophet's emergence some 360 idols were placed in and around the Ka'ba. The most important of these was Hubal. It was a big statue in human form of which a hand having been broken the Quraysh had it remade with gold. Two of the idols in the Ka'ba compound were 'Isâf and Nâ'ila, placed originally on the spot of the Zamzam well but subsequently removed to a spot near the hills of Ṣafâ and Marwah. According to pre-Islamic belief, 'Isâf and Nâ'ila were originally a man and a woman of Banû Jurhum who were turned into stones on account of their having desecrated the sacred precincts by making love in there.[2]

Besides thus making the Ka'ba the principal dormitory of their numerous idols the Arabs had developed a number of subsidiary Ka'bas *(ṭawâghît)*, so to say, at different places in the land, each with its presiding god or goddess. They used to visit those shrines at appointed times, circumambulate them and make sacrifices of animals there, besides performing other polytheistic rites. The most prominent of these shrines were those of *Al-Lât* at Ṭâ'if *Al-'Uzzâ* at Nakhlah and *Manât* near Qudayd. The origins of these idols are uncertain. Ibn al-Kalbî says that Al-Lât was "younger" (*'aḥdath*) than Manât, while Al-'Uzzâ was "younger" than both al-Lât and Manât.[3] But though Al-'Uzzâ was thus the youngest of the three, it was nonetheless the most important and the greatest (*'a'ẓam*) idol with the Quraysh who, along with Banû Kinânah ministered to it.[4] The Qur'ân specifically mentions these three goddesses of the Arabs.[5] Some of the other semi-or demi-Ka'bas were those of *Dhû al-Khalṣah* at Tabâlah (about "seven nights' journey" from Makka), of *Fils* at a place between the Ṭayy' Mountains, the *Ri'âm* at Ṣan'â' in Yaman, the *Ruḍâ'* in the territory of Banû Rabî'ah ibn Kâ'b, a group of

1. Ibn Hishâm, I, 77.
2. Ibn Hishâm, I, 82. Ibn al-Kalbî, *op.cit.*, 9, 29.
3. Ibn al-Kalbî, op.cit., 16, 17. The writer in the *First Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Vol. I, 380) supposes that Arabia's Al-Lât was the origin of the Greek goddess Leto, mother of the Sun-god Apollo.
4. Ibn Hishâm, I, 83; Ibn al-Kalbî, *op.cit.*, 18.
5. Q. 53:19-20.

Ka'bas (*Dhû al-Ka'abât*) at Sindâd in the land of Banû Bakr and Banû Taghlib and the Ka'ba of Banû al-Ḥârith at Najran.[1]

In addition to these subsidiary Ka'bas there were a number of other shrines of specific idols scattered throughout the peninsula. Of these mention may be made of the shrine of *Suwâ'* at Ruhâṭ (Yanbu'), that of *Wadd* at Dumat al-Jandal, that of *Yaghûth* at Jurash (in the Banû Ṭayy' territory), that of *Ya'ûq* at Hamdan in Yaman ("two nights" from Ṣan'â' in the north), that of *Nasr* in the land of Ḥimyar (Balkha') in Yaman, that of *'Umyânis* or *'Amm 'Anas* at Khawlân and that of *Sa'd* at Tanûfa.[2]

The pre-Islamic Arabs used to worship these idols or gods and goddesses in various ways. They used to make supplication to them, prostrated themselves before them, made offerings to them, beseeched their favour, sought to please or propitiate them in the belief that they were capable of doing good or harm to man, sacrificed animals on altars dedicated to them, made pilgrimages to their shrines, circumambulated them and drew arrows of divination by them or in their shrines. They also used to name themselves after these gods and goddesses, such as 'Abd Yaghûth, 'Abd al-'Uzzâ, etc. But though thus engrossed in extensive polytheism and idol-worship the pre-Islamic Arabs did not develop any elaborate mythology or involved theology around their gods and goddesses as did the ancient Greeks and the Hindus. No trace of such things can be found in the pre-Islamic poetry and traditions. This fact further indicates that polytheism and idol worship were not indigenous to the Isma'ilite Arabs but were grafted on to the Abrahamic tradition.

Nothing illustrates this fact better than the existence of unmistakable traces of the Abrahamic faith in the medley of polytheistic beliefs and practices. Of these the most remarkable was the existence of a belief in Allah as the Supreme God,[3] coupled with the belief in the existence of angels and *jinn*. At times of extreme peril the pre-Islamic Arabs even directly invoked Allah's mercy and succour.[4] Sometimes they used to swear by Allah,[5] besides frequently naming themselves 'Abd Allah. The recent discovery of a number of inscriptions, particularly in northern Arabia, containing the name

1. Ibn Hishâm, I, 83-89; Ibn Kalbî, *op.cit.*, 30, 44-47.
2. Ibn Hishâm, I, 78-83.
3. Q. 23:84-89; 31:25.
4. Q. 10:22; 31:32.
5. Q. 6:109.

of Allah,[1] which inscriptions are all post-Abrahamic, is a decisive proof of the prevalence of the notion of Allah among the Arabs since distant antiquity.[2] Other residue of the Abrahamic tradition was their universal reverence to the Ka'ba at Makka, their circumambulation of it, their making of lesser pilgrimage (*'umrah*) and the pilgrimage (*ḥajj*) to it, their performance of such Abrahamic rites in connection with the pilgrimage as the standing at *'Arafat*, the halt at Muzdalifa, the stay at Minâ, the sacrificing of animals on the occasion, their making seven runs between the Ṣafâ and the Marwah hills and their shaving of their heads. Some other remnants of the Abrahamic rites were their universally practising circumcision and their fasting on the day of 'Âshûrâ'.[3]

The coexistence of the Abrahamic tradition with the polytheistic beliefs and practices over long centuries did not however lead to the growth of any syncretic system of belief. The total picture that emerges is merely that of an ill-assorted amalgam with a number of peculiar by-products of that amalgam. One such by-product was the pre-Islamic Arabs' notion that their worshipping of the gods and goddesses would take them nearer to Allah;[4] that those gods and goddesses were their intercessors with Him;[5] and that some of their goddesses, the angels and even the *jinn* were Allah's daughters![6] Another outgrowth of the amalgam was their foolish practice of setting apart a portion (usually a major portion) of their crops and cattle for their gods and goddesses, and another portion (usually a minor portion) for Allah.[7] Other instances were their mixing up polytheistic clauses in the formula of "Response" (*talbiyah*) while performing the circumambulation of the Ka'ba,[8] the Makkans' not going upto 'Arafat at the time of *ḥajj* but only

1. See for instance F.V. Winnet, "Allah Before Islam", *M.W.*, XXVIII (1938), 239-248.

2. P.K. Hitti, after referring to the inscriptions, to some of the relevant Qur'ânic passages and to the existence of the name 'Abd Allah among the Quraysh, states that "evidently" Allah was "the tribal deity of the Quraysh." (Hitti, *op.cit.*, 101). The remark is both misleading and untenable. Neither did the inscriptions he cites belong to the Quraysh nor was the name 'Abd Allah exclusive to them. Not to speak of many others outside the Quraysh circle, the leader of the "Hypocrites" at Madina was 'Abd Allah ibn Ubayy!

3. *Bukhari*, no. 3831.

4. Q. 39:3 = ﴿... ما نعبدهم إلا ليقربونا إلى الله زلفى...﴾

5. 10:18 = ﴿... ويقولون هـٰؤلاء شفعـٰؤنا عند الله...﴾

6. 16:57 = ﴿ويجعلون لله البنـٰت...﴾ See also 37:149-154; 43:16; 52:39.

7. Q. 6:136.

8. Ibn Hishâm, I, 78.

upto Muzdalifa on account of a notion of their religious superiority and of their being the inhabitants of the sacred territory, their generally not allowing anyone to circumambulate the Ka'ba except in garments provided by them (*ḥums*) and their even circumambulating it in a naked state. With reference to such mingling of polytheistic beliefs and practices with a recognition of Allah as Supreme Lord the Qur'ân declares: "And most of them believe not in Allah without associating (others as partners) with Him."[1]

The Arabs' polytheism and worship of idols together with their mistaken notions about Allah determined their whole attitude to life and society. They considered life in this world to be the be-all and end-all of human existence. They worshipped and propitiated the gods and goddesses and recognized Allah for that purpose alone. They did not believe in resurrection, reward and punishment and life after death. "There is nothing but our life in this world; we shall die and live but shall never be raised up again", so they believed and declared.[2] This attitude led to a sense of ultimate unaccountability and a desire to enjoy the worldly life in all possible ways and without any restrictions. Licentiousness, prostitution, adultery, fornication and unbridled indulgence in wine, women and gambling were thus widely prevalent.[3] Unlimited polygamy was in vogue and a sort of polyandry, in which a particular woman was used as wife by a number of men (less than 10) was not uncommon. If a child was born in such a case, it was to be accepted by the person whom the woman declared to be its father.[4] Sometimes a person allowed his wife to go to other persons for the sake of having a son.[5]

The woman's position in society was indeed unenviable, though she participated in many a social and economic activity and though we sometimes find glowing tributes paid to sweethearts in pre-Islamic poetry. In general, women were treated as chattels. There was no limit to a man's

1. Q. 12:106 = ﴿وما يؤمن أكثرهم بالله إلا وهم مشركون﴾

2. Q. 23:37 = ﴿إن هي إلا حياتنا الدنيا نموت ونحيا وما نحن بمبعوثين﴾ There are indeed many passages in the Qur'ân which refer to this notion of the unbelievers. See for instance, 6:29; 17:49; 17:98; 23:35; 23:82; 37:16; 37:53; 37:58-59; 44:35; 50:3; 56:47 and 64:7. Similarly the Qur'ân is replete with passages to bring home the theme of resurrection and the Day of Judgement.

3. The Qur'ân condemned and prohibited these practices. See 5:3; 5:90; 17:23; 24:2-3; 25:68 and 60:12.

4. *Bukhârî*, no. 5127.

5. *Ibid.*

taking as many wives as he liked. Similarly he divorced his wives at will and quite frequently. There was no rule of prohibition; so a man could and did marry irrespective of blood-relationship. Often two sisters were joined as wives to a man at the same time. Sons married their father's ex-wives or widows (not mothers). There was no recognized rule for a woman to inherit from her ancestors or husband. Birth of a daughter was regarded as inauspicious and disliked.[1] Most inhuman was that many Arabs, out of a false sense of honour and for fear of poverty buried alive their young daughters.[2] On the eve of the rise of Islam this barbarous practice seems to have somewhat waned in and around Makka; but it was quite widespread in other parts of Arabia. The Qur'ân speaks of its having been the practice with "many polytheists" ﴿لكثير من المشركين﴾.[3] Qays ibn 'Âṣim of Banû Tamîm, who embraced Islam in 9 H., confessed that he had previously buried alive as many as 8 or 12 of his daughters.[4]

The sense of unaccountabilty also lay at the root of frequent killing of human beings without any qualms of conscience or remorse, and of stealing, plundering and spoliating others of their properties and possessions. The only check to such acts was tribal vengeance and retaliation. A number of superstititions and unconscionable practices also were prevalent among them. They believed in the utterances of soothsayers and astrologers and often decided upon a course of action, for instance a marriage or a journey, by means of divination by drawing or shooting arrows in a specified manner or near specific idols. Gambling and raffling were extensively in use. They even decided their respective shares in a particular thing, for instance the meat of a slaughtered animal, by casting lots with arrows. The meat was divided into unequal and preferential shares, these were indicated on arrows and these were then drawn, like the drawing of modern lottery tickets. Another peculiar practice was *ḥabal al-ḥabala*, or the selling of a pregnant camel on condition that the price was to be paid when she gave birth to a she-camel and that she-camel herself became pregnant.[5] Another super-

1. Q. 16:58-59.
2. Q. 6:137; 6:151.
3. Q. 6:137.
4. Al-Numayrî (al-Baṣrî), 'Abû Zayd 'Umar ibn Shabbah (173-262 H.), *Târîkh al-Madînat al-Munawwarah*, ed. F.M. Shaltut, Part II, second print, Madina, n.d., p. 532; *'Usd al-Ghâbah*, IV, 220; *Al-'Iṣâbah*, III, 253 (No. 7194). See also Al-Dârimî, I, Introduction, 3-4.
5. *Bukhârî*, no. 3843. The Prophet prohibited such dealings.

stitious and polytheistic practice was the tabooing of certan camels, goats or oxen, calling them *al-sâ'ibah*, *al-baḥîrah*, *al-waṣîlah* and *al-ḥâmî*. A she-camel consecutively giving birth to ten female calves without the intervention of any male calf was tabooed and was named *al-sâ'ibah*. She was not to be used for riding or carrying any load, her hair was not to be trimmed and her milk was not to be drunk except by a guest. If she subsequently gave birth to another female, that "daughter" of hers was called *al-baḥîrah* and was similarly tabooed. A she-goat similarly giving birth consecutively to ten females in five conceptions was likewise tabooed and called *al-waṣîlah*. A bull fathering consecutively ten female calves was also tabooed and called *al-ḥâmî*.[1] The Qur'ân condemned such practices.[2] These practices and beliefs of the Arabs, particularly their polytheism, licentiousness, adultery, gambling, stealing, plundering, their burying alive of young daughters, their tribal spirit and excitability (*ḥamiyyah*), etc., were collectively referred to in the Qur'ân and the traditions as *jâhiliyyah*.[3]

While this was the general socio-religious scene, other religious systems like Christianity, Judaism, Mazdaism (Zoroastrianism) and Sabaism (or Sabianism) had made their way into the peninsula in a limited way. Christianity was introduced in some northern tribes, particularly among the Ghassanids and in Ḥîra mainly at the instance and initiative of the Byzantine authorities. Some princes of Ḥîra had embraced it. In the south it was introduced in Yaman mainly after the first Abyssinain occupation of that land (340-378 A.C.). In its neighbouring region of Najran Christianity of the Monophysite type was introduced by a missionary from Syria named Faymiyûn.[4] A number of people of the area embraced that faith. There was also a sprinkling of Christian immigrants and converts at Makka at the time of the Prophet's rise.

So far as Judaism was concerned it found its place in the peninsula not so much by conversion as by immigration of the Jews into it. This immigration took place mainly at two periods — one after the Babylonian occupation of Palestine in 587 B.C., and for a second time after the Roman conquest of the land and the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus in 70 A.C. A number of

1. Ibn Hishâm, I, 89.
2. Q. 5:103; 6:139.
3. Q. 3:154; 5:50; 33:33; 48:26 and *Bukhârî*, no. 3524.
4. Ibn Hishâm, I, 31-34.

Jewish tribes migrated into Arabia and were setteld at places like Yathrib (Madina), Khaybar, Taymâ' and Fadak. Not that they remained completely inactive in the matter of propagation of their faith. According to tradition they made a convert of the Himyarite king (Tubba') Abû Karîb As'ad Kâmil (385-420 A.C) when he visited Madina in the course of a northern expedition and sent with him two rabbis to propagate Judaism in Yaman.[1] The extent of the success of these Jewish missionaries in Yaman is not clear; but a descendant of As'ad Kâmil's, Dhû Nuwâs, proved to be a vigorous champion of Judaism. He persecuted the Christians not only of Yaman but even massacred the Christian community of Najran, throwing a large number of them in a deep ditch full of fire.[2] His intolerance brought about a joint Byzantine-Abyssinian intervention in Yaman leading to the end of Dhû Nuwâs's rule and the beginning of the second Abyssinian occupation of the land under Abrahah. As noted earlier, Abrahah determined to Christianize the whole land, built a gigantic cathedral at Ṣan'â' and led a campaign against Makka in 570-71 A.C. to destroy the Ka'ba.

Mazdaism or Zoroastrianism, which prevailed in Persia, found some converts in the eastern coastal region and Bahrayn. Some persons in Yaman also embraced it after the Persian occupation of the land in 525 A.C. Sabianism or Sabaism, to which the Qur'ân makes reference,[3] probably represented an ancient faith of either Babylonian or south Arabian origin consisting of astral worship. Its votaries were very few at the time of the rise of islam. At any rate, it was considered a foreign religion; for whenever a person abandoned his ancestral faith the Arabs used to say that he had turned a Sabian.[4]

All these religions, however, had very little effect upon the life and society of the Arabs in general. Particularly Christianity and Judaism had compromised their positions by their conflicts and intolerance of each other, by their internal dissensions and by their deviation from the original teachings of Jesus and Moses (p.b.t.) To the discerning Arab Christianity, with its doctrines of incarnation and the Trinity, besides the worship of the images of Jesus and Mary, appeared little better than his worship of the idols together with a recognition of Allah as the Supreme Lord. Similarly Judaism, with its

1. Ibn Hishâm, I, pp. 26-27.
2. This incident is referred to in Q. 85:4.
3. Q. 2:62; 5:69; 22:17.
4. *Bukhârî*, no. 3523; *Musnad*, III, 492; IV, 341; Ibn Hishâm, I, 344.

exclusivity and its claim of 'Uzayr being the son of God, appeared equally polytheistic. This is highlighted by the fact that on eve of the rise of Islam a number of people came out in search of the true Abrahamic faith and went by the appellation of *ḥanîfs*.[1] Even if the emergence of these men is regarded as the outcome of an interaction between the existence of the Abrahamic tradition on the one hand and the presence of Christianity and Judaism in Arabia on the other, the fact that almost all the *ḥanîfs* turned their faces away from both these religions only illustrates their inefficacy on the mind of knowledgeable Arabs of the time.

V. THE WORLD BEYOND

Arabia was not of course the whole world; nor were the Arabs the only people steeped in *jâhiliyyah*. There were lands and peoples beyond, and *jâhiliyyah* too. The world at the time was notionally divided into three broad regions. In the west lay the Byzantine and Roman world, extending from what is now modern Iraq in the east to the Atlantic in the west (excluding Africa). To the east of this region lay its rival, the Persian empire, extending from Iraq in the west to the Indus Vallely in the east. The third region lay to the east of the Persian empire and consisted of the much coveted but little known lands of India and China. There were other lands and peoples in the far east and the far west; but they were not known. Even if known they, from what we now know of them, would not have presented a better spectacle, politically or culturally.

The world scene was dominated by the rivalry and conflicts between the Byzantine and the Persian empires, the two great powers of the time. The conflict was of old origin. It found expression in the past through conflicts between Greece and Persia (the Graeco-Persian wars). When the Roman empire succeeded to the Greek civilization, the tradition of conflict also was taken over by Rome; and when the Roman Empire in the west came to an end in 476 A.C. and the Roman Empire in the east (the Byzantine empire) was established with its capital at Constantinople, it inherited the same tradition of conflict with the Persian empire. The dissolution of the Roman Empire in the west was precipitated and accompanied by the onrush of a number of northern peoples, the Ostro-Goths (Eastern Goths), the Vissi-Goths (Western Goths), the Vikings, the Franks, the Vandals (whence *vandalism*), etc. The "civilized" Romans called these progenitors of the

1. *Infra*, Ch. XIII, sec.I.

modern German, French, Spanish and English nations "Barbarians"; and modern European historians term the history of these peoples from the fifth to the 10th century as the history of the "Dark Ages" in Europe. Needless to point out, Islam rose in Arabia when Europe was passing through the Dark Ages.

None of the three regions of the world was devoid of impressive material civilizations, however. India and China could boast of as high a degree of material civilization as could the Graeco-Roman world and Persia. Similarly Petra, Palmyra in northern Arabia, not to speak of Assyria, Babylonia, Phoenicia, south Arabia and Egypt, did not lag far behind in respect of material civilization. Indeed the Arabs shared with the other peoples the elements of material civilization as much as in trade and commerce. So did the other peoples share with the Arabs the type of beliefs, practices and habits that constitute *jâhiliyyah* in Islamic parlance.

The Two most distinctively constituent elements of *jâhiliyyah* were polytheism and idol worship, with all their superstitious beliefs and practices. These were no monopoly of the Arabs, but were prevalent more extensively among the more materially civilized peoples. While the Indus Valley civilzation shared with the Tigris-Euphrates Valley civilization the prototypes of Gilgamesh and other gods and goddesses, the Greek and Indian pantheons consisted of many counterparts of each other's gods and goddesses. The Hindus' *Varuna* is exactly the Greeks' Apollo. Just as the Greeks philosophized and idealized their idolatry through an elaborate theology and mythology, so did the ancient Hindus develop a no less involved and intricate theology and mythology.

Polytheism, idolatry and superstitions were in fact extensively entrenched in India. The *Rig-Veda*, the earliest of the four *Vedas* of the Hindus,[1] does of course contain traces of monotheism. But the Hindus had completely lost sight of it and instead deified every conceivable objects — stones, trees, rivers, the sun, the moon, the stars, mountains, princes, animals and even the reproductive organs. They installed the images of these and other gods and goddesses in various forms and shapes and worshipped them with elaborate rites and superstitious customs. In the course of time the Hindu mythology counted some 330 million gods and goddesses — a figure obviously many times more than the number of population at the time. Their devotion to

1. The other three *Vedas* are the *Sâma*, the *Yayuh* and the *Atharva*.

idolatry made them good sculptors like the ancient Greeks and Romans. While the Arabs idealized and idolized some of their prominent ancestors, the Hindus not only did so but even conceived them to be the incarnations of God. In fact it was the Hindus who first formulated the doctrine of incarnation and reincarnation of God. Râma and Krishna, among others, are to them incarnations of God born on the earth in human form. Like the Arabs the Hindus did recognize the existence of a supreme God; but they did so in the form of a Trinity of three distinct persons, *Brahma*, *Vishnu*, and *Śiva*. if the Arabs tabooed some animals and prohibited their use after some specific performances on their part, the Hindus worshipped a number of animals, deified the cow and prohibited the eating of beef (not the other uses of the cattle), although the Rig-vedic Brahmans are found to relish beef to their hearts' content.[1] By the system of *caste* and untouchability Hinduism consigned the generality of their people, particularly the "lowest" order, the *Sudra*, to the deepest depth of degredation. Polygamy was in vogue and the position of women in society was no better. Adultery and fornication were common; and if the Hindus did not bury alive their young daughters, they burnt alive their widows, young or old, with their dead husbands.[2]

As a protest against the excesses of the caste system and other abuses of Hinduism Prince Siddhârtha belonging to the Sâkya tribe of Kapilâvastu (north India), better known as Gautama Buddha (566-486 B.C.) preached Buddhism which enunciated the "Eight-Fold Path" of "Right Thinking", "Right Doing", "Right Hearing", etc. He avoided discussing the intricate questions of theology and in fact remained silent even about God. Soon after his death, however, his teachings were perverted and, due to the influence of Hinduism, he himself was deified and consecrated as an incarnation of God by the Buddhists themselves who began to worship his image. By the seventh century A.C. further Brahmanical and Hindu reaction succeeded in practically expelling Buddhism from the land of its birth. While it continued to maintain a precarious existence in the peripheral regions of India, this perverted or rather idolatrous Buddhism found its way into the Far East, the South-East Asia and China.

In China a curious mixture of Confucianism and Taoism prevailed. A

1. See Rejendralal Mitra, "Beef in ancient India", *J.A.S.B.* 1872, pp. 174-196.

2. This inhuman practice, called *Satî*, was checked by law in 1829 by the English East India Company's government in India.

third trend was introduced into the land by the perverted form of Buddhism. It could not, however, make much headway till at a later time. Confucianism and Taoism were characterized by many idolatrous and superstitious beliefs and practices. Above all, magic, mesmerism and hypnotism dominated the religious life and these were mastered and practised by the priestly class chiefly to maintain their position as semi-gods or demi-gods to the common man. All these paved the way for the Chinese rulers to claim themselves to be gods to their own peoples and to demand their obeisance and worship as such.

While this was the socio-religious situation in the then "third world", the picture in the other two worlds was no better. In the Persian empire the original teachings of Zoroaster were largely forgotten. The book attributed to him, the *Avesta*, did not exist in its original form. An addendum to it was made by the priestly class in the defunct Zend (زند) language and the combined compilation came to be known as the *Zend-Avesta*. Only a couple of copies of that compilation existed at the time of Alexander's invasion. Those too were burnt and destroyed when he captured and burnt Persipolis in 330 B.C. A substitute *Zend-Avesta* was subsequently prepared. Out of the chaos and confusion there emerged, on the one hand, the worship of fire and, on the other, the deification of the forces of good, which was called *Ahura Mazda*, and that of the forces of evil, which was called *Ahura Man*.[1] Both were supplemented and accompanied by many idolatrous and superstitious practices resembling those of the Hindus. The *Ahura Mazda*, the god of good, as also fire were worshipped and temples and fire-places were erected in honour of them. In the beginning of the sixth century the confused social order was further confounded by the introduction of somewhat communistic reforms suggested by a thinker named Mazdak. He thought that all the social problems and evils were caused by man's urge to enjoy beautiful women and to possess wealth and land. Hence he advocated the abolition of the institution of marriage, making room for any man to enjoy any woman, and also the abolition of all proprietary rights except the right of the monarch to his possessions and treasures. The process was quickly reversed by king Anûshirwân who succeeded his father Kobad in 531 A.C. Even then, behind the facade of imperial greatness and apparently invincible military might

1. The term *Ahura* is a soft form of *Ashura* which to the Hindu signifies demon. The similarity is due to the basic unity of Indo-Aryan languages. Also the Hindu term *deota* or *deva*, meaning god, is similar to *deity* of Latin origin.

great social confusion and moral chaos prevailed throughout the Persian dominions.

In the Graeco-Roman or Byzantine world Christianity was the dominant religion. It did not consist of the original teachings of Jesus (p.b.h.) but was a syncretism between them and Graeco-Roman polytheistic ideas effected by St. Paul. The distinctive innovations made were the doctrine of incarnation, i.e., of Jesus's being God incarnate born in human form, those of the Trinity and of atonement. Many modern Christian scholars now acknowledge that the doctrines of incarnation and of the Trinity were adopted from the Greeks. These concepts, it may be recalled, were prevalent among the Hindus too. The syncretism was effected with a view to making the religion palatable and easily acceptable to the people of the Graeco-Roman world who had a long tradition of polytheism behind them. The Byzantine empire adopted and championed it to prop up the empire and to gain the adhesion of the "barbarians" and others who peopled it. Henceforth, in the name of Christianity, Paulism marched triumphantly on. The doctrines and the sacred texts were officially adopted at the Council of Nicea in 325 A.C. Even then sectarian differenes could not be stamped out. The most notable of the dissidents were the Nestorains who, on account of their insistence on the "dual nature of Christ", were persecuted. Most of them found shelter in the Byzantium's rival Persian empire. Similarly the Jews, persecuted by the Byzantine Christian authorities and their protégés migrated to Persia, Arabia and elsewhere. The revulsion against the Byzantine empire and the Christianity it championed may be gauged from the fact that in the former's continual conflict with the Persian empire the sympathy of the pagan Arabs and of the Jews in Arabia lay generally with the pagan Persian empire.

The Byzantine Emperor built beautiful churches in every part of the empire in which images of Jesus and Mary were placed and worshipped together with the singing of praises for "God in Three Persons". Churches were also built to the "Mother of God." The Byzantine state policy was shaped by the dream of a universal empire and a universal religion. This policy led to its intervention twice in south Arabia (Yaman) vicariously through the Christian Abyssinia. These moves were also in the nature of commercial warfare with the Persian empire. Following Abrahah's disastrous campaign against the Ka'ba in 570-71 A.C. the Yamani resistance to Abyssinian-Byzantine intervention was headed by Sayf ibn Dhî Yazan. In response to his request the Persian emperor sent a contingent to Yaman by sea. With

their support the Yamanis put an end to the Abyssinian rule there.[1] The Byzantines made a last serious attempt to plant Christianity at Makka itself by bringing about a change of government there through 'Uthmân ibn al-Ḥuwayrith; but he was rejected even by his own clan, Banû Asad.[2]

Such was the state of religion and politics in the world surrounding Arabia. It would be clear that polytheism, idolatry, superstitions and inhuman practices prevailed more or less almost everywhere in the then known world. In that perspective the Arabs' *jâhiliyyah* was only typical of the habits, attitudes and practices in the world surrounding them. The rise of Islam was as much a revolution to the Arabs as it was a check and disappointment to the Sasanid dream of world domination and the Byzantine dream of a universal empire and a universal religion.

1. Ibn Hishâm, I., 63-68.
2. *Infra*, pp. 330-334.

CHAPTER III

THE ORIENTALISTS ON SOME BACKGROUND TOPICS

The orientalists have done a good deal of work on the pre-Islamic history of Arabia, particularly on the ancient south and north Arabian civilizations, carrying out excavations at different sites, deciphering the inscriptions found and studying the ancient languages. It is not intended to survey these here.[1] The present chapter is concerned with the views expressed by a number of the orientalists on topics related more directly to the rise of the Prophet and of Islam. Of such topics the following deserve special mention.

(1) The concept of *Jâhiliyyah*;

(2) The Ka'ba and the Abrahamic tradition, including the intended sacrifice of Ismâ'îl;

(3) The supposed influence of Judaism and Christianity, and of the environment in general, upon the Prophet; and

(4) The socio-economic or materialistic interpretation of the rise of Islam.

Of these four topics, no.3 has been dealt with separately at a later stage in this work in connection with the Prophet's youth and life before his call to Prophethood.[2] No.4, the topic of materialistic interpretation, has been considered in the following chapter and also, some aspects of it, at a later stage in connection with the *Ḥarb al-Fijâr* and the *Ḥilf al-Fuḍûl* and the question of relevance of the early teachings of the Qur'ân to the contemporary situation.[3] The present chapter, therefore, looks into the two remaining topics.

I. ON *JÂHILIYYAH*

The term *Jâhiliyyah* is generally translated by the orientalists as "Ignorance or Barbarism" and they take it to refer to *the period* before the rise of Islam. Writing early in the twentieth century R.A. Nicholson divided Arabian history into three periods — the Sabaean and Himyarite period (800 B.C.-500 A.C.), the "Pre-Islamic period" (500-622 A.C.) and the

1. For a consolidated account of most of the findings see Jawâd 'Alî, *Târîkh al-'Arab Qabl al-Islâm*, 8 Vols., Baghdad, 1369-1378.

2. *Infra*, Ch. XI

3. *Infra*, Chs. IX & XXIV.

"Muḥammadan period". He called the second period "the Age of Ignorance or Babarism". In an explanatory note he stated: "Strictly speaking, the *Jâhiliyyah* includes the whole time between Adam and Muḥammad, but in a narrower sense it may be used ...to denote the pre-Islamic period..."[1] At a subsequent stage in his work, while dealing with the history and legends of the pagan Arabs, he further stated: "Muḥammadans include the whole period of Arabian history from the earliest times down to the establishment of Islam in the term *Jâhiliyyah*". He then pointed out that Goldziher had shown, however, that the term *jahl* was to be understood not as an antonym of *'ilm*, but of *ḥilm*, and that it should therefore be taken to mean not so much "ignorance" as "wildness", "savagery", "the tribal pride and endless tribal feuds, the cult of revenge" and other pagan characteristics that Islam sought to remove.[2] On the basis of this interpretation Nicholson described the history and legends of the pagan Arabs as gleaned from the pre-Islamic poetry.

Closely following the treatment of Nicholson but writing some quarter of a century subsequently, P.K. Hitti similarly divided Arabian history into three main periods—the "Sabaeo-Himyrite period", the "Jahiliyyah period" and the "Islamic period". He then stated, almost echoing Nichololson, that in a sense *Jâhiliyyah* extends from the "creation of Adam down to the mission of Muḥammad"; but in reality it "means the period in which Arabia had no dispensation, no inspired prophet, no revealed book; for ignorance and barbarism can hardly be applied to such a cultured and lettered society as that developed by the south Arabians." He further says that the Prophet declared that Islam was to obliterate all that had gone before it and that this constituted a "ban on all pre-Islamic ideas and ideals"; but, he adds,"ideas are hard to kill, and no one person's veto is strong enough to cancel the past."[3]

Thus both Nicholson and Hitti take the term *Jâhiliyyah* primarily in the sense of a *period*. Hitti also gives his own definition of that period. Subsequent writers have generally followed them in taking the term in the sense of a period of Arabian history. it may be mentioned that classical Muslim scholars also did sometimes attempt to identify the period of *Jâhiliyyah*; but their emphasis was always on the habits, practices, traits and characteristics that

1. R.A. Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs* (1907), 1988 reprint, p. XXIV.
2. *Ibid.*, 30, citing Goldziher, *Muhammedanische Studien*, I, 225.
3. P.K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs* (1937), 10th edition, 1986 reprint, p. 87.

constituted *Jâhiliyyah*, and not so much on any specific period.[1] Indeed, it is in the sense of particular habits and practices and not as a period of history that the expression *Jâhiliyyah* was understood during the time of the Prophet and his immediate successors. At any rate, Muslim historians, even when speaking in terms of a period, did never identify *Jâhiliyyah* as a period between 500 and 622 A.C. This identification and limitation is Nicholson's when he says that the "second period", i.e. the "Pre-Islamic period" (500-622 A.C) "is called by Muḥammadan writers the *Jâhiliyyah*, i.e., the Age of Ignorance or Barbarism." No classical Muslim historian has so defined and identified *Jâhiliyyah*.

The confusion seems to have proceeded from an inexact English rendering of the term *Jâhiliyyah* as "ignorance" or "barbarism", a phenomenon not infrequent in the cases of such inexact renderings of Islamic technical terms into English or other languages. It is beacause of this rendering of the term as "ignorance" or "barbarism" that Nicholson, finding it obviously inapplicable to the Sabaean and Himyarite civilizations, excludes them from his identification of the "Age of Ignorance and Barbarism" and limits it to the period 500-622 A.C. While Nicholson is implicit, Hitti is explicit on this point. Hence he plainly points out that "ignorance and barbarism can hardly be applied to such a cultured and lettered society as that developed by the south Arabians." The same impression seems to have led Goldziher to point out that *Jâhiliyyah* is to be taken not as an antonym of *'ilm* but of *ḥilm* which, he says, means "the moral reasonableness of civilized man". It may only be pointed out that this definition too cannot strictly be applied to the pre-Islamic Arabs as a whole; for though many of them did not possess *ḥilm*, most of them valued it as an ideal and some of them did possess it . Also, this definition tends to sidetrack some very fundamental elements of *Jâhiliyyah*, namely, polytheism, idol worship, adultery and wrongfully depriving others of their rights. These characteristics are very much within the definition of *Jâhiliyyah*, though they may not be always outside the bounds of "lettered" and "cultured" society. Hitti's amended definition, namely, that *Jâhiliyyah* is "the period in which Arabia had no dispensation, no inspired prophet, no revealed book", is equally noncognizant of some very essential elements of *Jâhiliyyah* and is at its best ingenious. It is the result of the same initial confusion about the meaning being ignorance or

1. See for instance Al-Ṭabarî, *Tafsîr*, XXII, 4.

barbarism. As such, it is as mistaken as is his further statement that the Prophet "declared that the new religion was to obliterate all that had gone before it." The Prophet did not obliterate all that had gone before it. On the contrary, both the Prophet and Islam approved and retained many pre-Islamic (not *Jâhiliyyah*) institutions and practices and claimed to continue and complete what the previous prophets had brought to mankind. And since Hitti's last mentioned statement is palpably wrong, his other remark based on it, that "no one person's veto is strong enough to cancel the past", is both inappraopriate and uncalled for.

If the technical term *Jâhiliyyah* must needs be translated, the word "error" or "misguidance" would probably come closer to the meaning. But it is not absolutely necessary to translate the term. The sense can be understood by following its usage. the Qur'ân, the Prophet and the early Muslims used the expression *Jâhiliyyah* to denote certain beliefs, habits and practices — a state of affairs — and not in the sense of a historical period. One very illustrative instance is the report of the speech on behalf of the Muslim emigrants at the Abyssinian court delivered by Ja'far ibn 'Abî Ṭâlib. He started his address saying: "*Jâhiliyyah* people were we, worshipping idols, eating dead animals, committing adultery and fornication (*al-fawâḥish*), ignoring blood-relations (*qat' al-riḥâm*), forgetting covenants of protection, the strong ones devouring the weak, etc."[1] The acts and practices enumerated are only an elucidation of *Jâhiliyyah*. Similarly 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abbâs (r.a.), one of the earliest authorities on the interpretation of the Qur'ân, states that if one likes to understand the meaning of *jahl* one should read the *'âyahs* following *'âyah* 130 of *sûrat al-'An'âm* (no.6).[2] These *'âyahs*, particularly *'âyahs* 136-139, speak about the Arabs' polytheistic practices, their tabooing of certain animals, their killing of female babes, etc. Again, Ibn al-Athîr, one of the early authorities on the technical terms used in the reports (*ḥadîth*) very clearly states that *Jâhiliyyah* means "the state of affairs (*al-ḥâl*) in which the Arabs were before the coming of Islam."[3] It denotes a state of belief, habits and practices. As such it may not be confined to any specific period of time, nor to any given people. *Jâhiliyyah* existed in the past among the Arabs, as

1. Ibn Hisham, I, 336.
2. *Bukhârî*, no. 3524.
3. Ibn al-Athîr ('Abu al-Sa'âdat al-Mubârak ibn Muḥammad al-Jazarî, 544-606 H.), *Al-Nihâyah Fî Gharîb al-Ḥadîth wa al-'Athar*, ed. Ṭâhir Aḥmad al-Jâwzî & Maḥmûd Muḥammad al-Ṭanâḥî, Vol. I, n.d. p. 323.

also among many others of their contemporaries. It continues in places and peoples even after the coming of Islam.[1]

II REGARDING THE ABRAHAMIC TRADITION

(a) Consideration of Muir's views

Of greater import is, however, the opinions of the orientalists abut the Abrahamic tradition. Generally they deny that Prophet Ibrahîm (p.b.h.) ever came to Makka, that Hâjar and Ismâ'îl (p.b.h.) were ever left there by him and that the Ka'ba was built by him. They also assert that it was Isḥâq and not Ismâ'îl (p.b.t.), who was intended to be sacrificed. These views are as old as orientalism itself. It was Muir, however, who gave those views their modern form and pattern. And ever since his time others have mainly reproduced his arguments and assumptions.[2] "The connection of the Abraham myth with the Ka'bah", writes Margoliouth, "appears to have been the result of later speculation, and to have been fully developed only when a political need for it arose."[3] Of the others who reiterated and elaborated the same views mention may be made of J.D. Bate and Richard Bell. The former prepared an independent monograph entitled *Enquiries into the claims of Ishmael*[4] in which he set forth almost all that the orientalists have to say on the theme including the question of the sacrifice of Ismâ'îl. The latter, Richard Bell, suggested that the relevant Qur'ânic passages on the subject are "later" revisions during the Madinite period of the Prophet's mission.[5]

Clearly, the subject calls for a separate treatment. The scope of the present work, however, necessitates confining the present section to a consideration of Muir's views that are mainly elaborated and reiterated by his successors.

On the basis of the information contained in the Old Testament Muir says: "Hager, when cast forth by Abraham, dwelt with her son in the wild-

1. See Muḥammad Quṭb, *Jâhiliyyat al-Qarn al-'Ishrîn*, Cairo, 1384.

2. See For instance A Guillaume, *Islam*, London, 1964, pp. 61-62; P. Lammens, *L'Islam, Croyance et Institutions*, Beirut, 1926, pp. 28, 33.

3. D.S. Margoliouth, *Mohammed and the Rise of Islam*, 3rd edn., London, 1905, p. 104. This specific comment has been discussed at a subsequent stage in this work, *infra*, Ch. XIV, secs. I & II.

4. First published, London, 1926; republished in 1984.

5. R. Bell, "The Sacrifice of Ishmael", *T.G.U.O.S.*, Vol. X, 29-31; and "The Origin of the 'Îd al-Aḍḥâ", *M.W.*, 1933, pp. 117-120.

erness of Paran, to the north of Arabia."[1] He further says that the "divine promise of temporal prosperity" in favour of Ismâ'îl was fulfilled and his twelve sons became "twelve princes" whose descendants were founders of numerous tribes. These tribes, and also other Abrahamic and collateral tribes lived, according to Muir, in northern Arabia extending "from the northern extremity of the Red Sea towards the mouth of the Euphrates."[2] He admits, however, that the Abrahamic tradition and the legend connected with the Ka'ba were widely current and accepted in Arabia and Makka before the rise of Islam;[3] but he holds that these traditions, though earlier than Islam, grew there much subsequently to the time of Ibrâhîm. Muir mentions in this connection that though "a great proportion of the tribes in northern and central Arabia were descended from Abraham, or from collateral stock, we have no materials for tracing their history from the era of that patriarch for nearly two thousand years."[4] Therefore he proceeds to "conjecture"[5] the "facts" as follows. He says that there were earlier settlers at Makka, many of of whom were natives of Yaman. They brought with them Sabeanism, stone worship and idolatry. "These became connected with the well of Zamzam, the source of their prosperity; and near to it they erected their fane [the Ka'ba], with its symbolical Sabeanism and mysterious blackstone. Local rites were superadded; but it was Yemen, the cradle of the Arabs, which furnished the normal elements of the system."[6] Subsequently, an Ismâ'îlite tribe from the north, "either Nabataean or some collateral stock", was attracted there by its wells and favourable position for caravan trade. This tribe carried "in its train the patriarchal legend of Abrahamic origin" and engrafted "it upon the local superstitions." "Hence arose the mongrel worship of the Kaaba, with its Ishmaelitish legends, of which Mahomet took so great advantage."[7]

1. W. Muir, *The Life of Mahomet*, 1st edn, Vol. I., London, 1858, p. cxi, citing Gen. XXI:25; XXV:18.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Ibid.*, pp.. cxv; cxxv.

4. *Ibid.*, p. cxvi.

5. Muir specifically uses this term twice, once at p. cxxv and again at p. cxxvi. He also designates his account as the "supposed history of the rise of Mecca and its religion". See side-note on p. ccxiv of the first edition and p. civ of the third revised edition by T.H. Weir, London, 1923.

6. *Ibid.*, 1st edn., p. ccxv.

7. *Ibid.*, pp. cxxv-cxxvi.

In support of this "conjecture" Muir advances a number of other suppositions. He says that though the existence of the Abrahamic tradition was extensive and universal, it is "improbable" that it "should have been handed down from the remote age of the patriarch by an independent train of evidence in any particular tribe, or association of tribes". According to him, "it is far more likely that it was borrowed from the Jews, and kept alive by occasional communication with them."[1] Having said so he states that so "extensive a homage," i.e., homage to the Ka'ba "must have its beginnings in an extremely remote age; and similar antiquity must be ascribed to the essential concomitants of the Meccan worship, — the Kaaba with its blackstone, sacred limits, and the holy months."[2] He then attempts to prove the great antiquity of the Ka'ba and its rites by mentioning that the Greek historian Herodotus (5th century B.C.) speaks of one of the chief goddesses of the Arabs and mentions her name as *Alilat* which "is strong evidence of the worship, at that early period, of *Allât* the Meccan idol."[3] Next Muir points out that the Greek author Diodorus Sicilus, writing in the first century B.C., spoke of a "temple" in Arabia which was "greatly revered by all the Arabs". Muir observes that this must refer to the Ka'ba, "for we know of no other which ever commanded the universal homage of Arabia."[4] Finally, Muir suggests that the practice of idolatry was old and widespread in Arabia and, on the authority of Ibn Hishâm (Ibn 'Isḥâq), points out that idolatrous shrines were "scattered from Yemen to Dûma [Dûmat al-Jandal] and even as far as Hîra, some of them subordinate to the Kaaba and having rites resembling those of Mecca."[5]

On the basis of such facts and arguments Muir states that there "is no trace of anything Abrahamic in the essential elements of the superstition. To kiss the black stone, to make the circuits of the Kaaba, and perform the other observances at Mecca, Arafat and the vale of Mina, to keep the sacred months, and to hallow the sacred territory, have no conceivable connection with Abraham, or with ideas and principles which his descendants would be likely to inherit from him."[6] These were according to him "either strictly

1. *Ibid.*, p. cxv. See also pp. cxxiv-cxxv.
2. *Ibid.*, p. ccxii.
3. *Ibid.*, p. ccx.
4. *Ibid.*, p. ccxi.
5. *Ibid.*, p. ccxiii.
6. *Ibid.*, p. ccx.

local" or being connected with the system of idolatry prevailing in the south of the peninsula, were imported to Makka by Banû Jurhum and others. And when the Abrahamic legend was grafted on "the indigenous worship, the rites of sacrifice and other ceremonies were now for the first time introduced, or at any rate first associated with the memory of Abraham ."[1] And once the legend was thus established at Makka, its "mercantile eminennce" which "attracted the Bedouins of Central Arabia" to it, "by degrees imparted a national character to the local superstition, till at last it became the religion of Arabia."[2] Finally, suggests Muir, the Prophet only took his stand on this "common ground", and effected a bridge between the "gross idolatry of the Arabs and the pure theism of Israel". "The rites of the Kaaba were retained, but stripped by him of every idolatrous tendency..."[3]

Clearly, this thesis of Muir's is based on four assumptions, namely, (a) that polytheism and polytheistic practices existed at Makka before the migration of the Ismailite tribe there; (b) that the Ka'ba and the rites connected with it are polytheistic and are of south Arabian origin, "having no conceivable connection with Abraham"; (c) that an immigrant Ismailite tribe superimposed the Abrahamic legend on those rites and (d) that the combined system was then by degrees adopted by the Arab tribes as the national religion.

The facts and arguments adduced by Muir do not, however, substantiate any of the four above-mentioned elements of the theory. With regard to the first assumption Muir mentions three facts. First, he says that the fifth century B.C. Greek historian Herodotus speaks of an Arabian goddess *Alilat*. Muir notes that Herodotus does not speak specifically about Makka but maintains that *Alilat* should be identified with the well-known Makkan (in fact Ṭâ'ifian) goddess *Al-Lât*. It should be pointed out that Herodotus in fact speaks with reference to north Arabia. Even taking his statement to apply to Arabia in general, and accepting the identification of *Alilat* with *Al-Lât*, the evidence would take us back only to the 5th century B.C., that is, by Muir's own admission, to a period some one thousand and five hundred years subsequent to that of Ibrâhîm. Muir's second fact is that the first century B.C. Greek writer Deodorus Sicilus speaks of a universally venerated Arabian

1. *Ibid.*, p. ccxvi.
2. *Ibid.*, p. ccxv.
3. *Ibid.*, ccxviii.

"temple". Muir rightly takes it to refer to the Ka'ba; but this evidence takes us back still less in point of time. i.e., only to the first century B.C. Muir's third fact is that polytheism and polytheistic shrines were widespread all over Arabia. He cites this fact on the authority of Ibn Hishâm (in fact Ibn Isḥâq). It should be pointed out that the latter speaks of a state of affairs that prevailed prior to the emergence of the Prophet. Neither Ibn Isḥâq nor any other autority implies that the situation obtained from time immemorial. Thus, none of the facts mentioned by Muir takes us back beyond the fifth century B.C. It cannot be suggested that the supposed migration of the Ismailite tribe to Makka took place so late as the fifth century B.C. or even after that; for, Muir himself admits that the descendants of Kedar, son of Ismâ'îl, became so widespread in northern and central Arabia that the Jews, i.e., the Old Testament, used to speak of the Arab tribes generally of those regions as Kedarites.[1] According to modern critics, the extant Old Testament was composed not later than the fifth century B.C. As it speaks of a state of affairs already prevailing in northern and central Arabia, which includes Makka, for a long time, and not of a recent dispersion of the Kedarite tribes over those regions, the Ismâ'îlite tribes must have been settled at Makka long before the fifth century B.C.

Muir's second assumption that the Ka'ba and its rites are polytheistic, that they are of south Arabian (Yamanî) origin and that they have "no conceivable connection with Abraham" is both incorrect and misleading. The Ka'ba and its rites must of course be assigned a very high antiquity, as Muir emphasizes. But that in itself does not prove them to be pre-Abrahamic in point of time, nor that they are south Arabian in origin. Muir does not advance any evidence to show that the Ka'ba is of south Arabian origin. If it was established in imitation of anything like it existing in Yaman, we should have found some trace of that original temple or some mention of it in ancient accounts; and it should have been initially more important and more venerated than its supposed imitation temple at Makka. But the existence of no such old or venerable temple is known, neither in Yaman nor elsewhere in Arabia, from any source, not even from the writings of the ancient Greek authors. To cite the evidence of Deodorus again. He speaks of only one universally venerated "temple" in Arabia, not of anything else like it or superior to it. The existence of a number of idolatrous shrines throughout

1. *Ibid*. See also *Isaiah* 21:16-17.

Arabia before the rise of Islam to which Ibn Isḥâq refers and of which Muir speaks, including even the "Yamani Ka'ba " of Abrahah, were all established subsequently to and in imitation of the Makkan Ka'ba , not before it. Muir simply attempts to put the cart before the horse when he draws attention to the existence of these Ka'ba-like idolatrous shrines in order to suggest that the Makkan Ka'ba was originally one such idolatrous establishment. Even then he is forced to admit that many of those idolatrous shrines were subordinate to the Ka'ba "having rites resembling those at Mecca". In fact none of those shrines was older than the Ka'ba, nor was any one of them regarded by the Arabs as of similar antiquity and commanding comparable veneration. This fact alone proves that those shrines were established in imitation of the Ka'ba. That they were devoted to idolatrous gods or godesses was also naturally in imitation of the idolatry which had in the meantime been installed at the Ka'ba, not *vice-versa*, as Ibn Isḥâq and others very distinctly mention. Idolatry had of course been prevalent in many of the surrounding countries since a much earlier period; but to prove that the Ka'ba was originally built as an idolatrous temple requires some more relevant evidence than what Muir has adduced. All that he has mentioned, to repeat, takes us back only to the fifth century B.C. He cannot imply that the Ka'ba was built so late as the 5th century B.C. or around that time.

Muir admits that the Abrahamic tribes of Arabia "originally possessed a knowledge of God." They indeed did; and it has been noted earlier that despite their declension into gross idolatry they had not lost sight of Allah (God) as the Supreme Lord of the universe. And it is remarkable that throughout the ages the Arabs used to call the Ka'ba the "House of Allah" or *Bayt Allah*. While all the other shrines were each named after some specific god or goddess, such as the shrine of Al-Lât, that of Al-'Uzzâ, that of Wadd and so on, the Ka'ba was never called after any such idolatrous deity, not even after the Quraysh's principal idol Hobal. If the Ka'ba was originally built for any idolatrous deity, the name of that deity would have remained associated with it. It cannot be supposed that the name of that deity was obliterated when the immigrant Ismâ'îlites allegedly superimposed the Abrahamic tradition upon the "temple". If such subsequent superimposition had at all taken place, it is more in accord with reason that the name of that idolatrous deity would have been conjoined with Allah at the time of the supposed integration of the Ka'ba with the Abrahamic tradition.

To prove the supposed idolatrous origin of the Ka'ba Muir states that the

"native systems of Arabia were Sabeanism, Idolatry and *Stone worship*, all connected with the religion of Mecca."[1] This is a highly misleading statement. The religious systems mentioned were of course prevalent in Arabia at different places and at different times, not equally and everwhere at the same time. Sabeanism with its worship of the heavenly bodies prevailed in south Arabia. Muir does not show how this system was "connected with the religion at Mecca" except saying that as late as the fourth century "sacrifices were offered in Yemen to the sun, moon and stars" and that the "seven circuits of the Kaaba were probably emblematical of the revolutions of the planetary bodies."[2] It is not understandable how sacrifices offered in Yaman "to the sun, moon and stars" could be connected with the religion at Makka. The Makkan unbelievers did of course offer sacrifices to their idols; but they did never do so by way of worshipping the sun, the moon and the stars! Indeed the practice of sacrificing animals, or even human beings, for gods and goddesses, had been prevalent among many ancient peoples before even Prophet Ibrâhîm's p.b.h.) intended sacrifice of his son to Allah. But none would therefore suggest that such sacrifices by the other ancient peoples or by Ibrâhîm were only symbolical of Sabeanism! In fact the term Sabeanism is derived from the Sabaeans who emerged on the scene of history much subsequently to the generally assigned date of the Ka'ba. More specifically, worship of the heavenly bodies was prevalent among the ancient Greeks, among others. In that perspective Sabeanism was only a south Arabian manifestation of Hellenism.

More strange is Muir's statement that the "seven circuits of the Kaaba were probably emblematical of the revolutions of the planetary bodies". There is no indication whatsoever that the Sabaeans or other ancient worshippers of the heavenly bodies used to make seven circuits around any object as part of their astral worship. It is also quite unreasonable to suppose that the ancient Makkans or others of the time were aware of "the revolutions of the planetary bodies". If they had such modern astronomical knowledge, they would not have worshipped the heavenly bodies at all.

With regard to idolatry and stone worship Muir, after referring to what Ibn Isḥâq says about the existence of idolatrous shrines in Arabia and how the Ismâ'ilites, when dispersing from Makka, used to carry with them a

1. Muir, op.cit., p. ccxii.
2. *Ibid.*

stone from the sacred precincts, states that this widespread tendency to stone worship probably "*occasioned* the superstition of the Kaaba with its black stone, than that it took its rise from that superstition."[1] As shown above, the evidence adduced by Muir does in no way show that the idolatrous shrines in Arabia and the attendant worship of stones or stone images came into existence before the erection of the Ka'ba. And Muir is grossly wrong in supposing that the Black Stone at the Ka'ba was symbolical of stone worship. Whatever the origin of the Black Stone and whatever the origin of stone worship in Arabia, the pre-Islamic Arabs, neither of Makka nor of the other places, are never found to have worshipped the Black Stone of the Ka'ba . The kissing of the Black Stone was no worship of the stone itself; it marked only the start of making the circuit around the Ka'ba. This circumambulation was not done for any specific idol in the Ka'ba or around it. It was to all intents and purposes a circumambulation of the House of Allah. And it is only an instance of the peculiar coexistence of the Abrahamic traditions and idolatry which the Makkan religion represented on the eve of the rise of Islam. It should be noted here that it was very much the practice of Ibrâhîm (p.b.h.) that in the course of his travels from one land to another he set up, wherever he halted, a stone to mark a place dedicated to the worship of Allah ("an altar unto God" as it is put in the English versions of the Old Testament).[2] That these places of worship were symbolized by stones erected as pillars is clear from Gen. 28:10, 18-22, which informs us that Jacob (Ya'qûb, p.b.h.), when he journeyed from Beer-Sheba to Haran, halted at night at a certain place and in the morning took the stone he had used as his pillow and "set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it. And he called the name of that place Beth-el." He further declared: "And this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house."[3] In fact these stone pillars were in the nature of foundation stones laid at different places where houses for God's worship were intended to be erected. The Black Stone of the Ka'ba was one such stone with which the patriarch Ibrâhîm (p.b.h.) laid the foundation of the House of Allah (Beth-el).[4] Neither was the Black Stone of the

1. *Ibid.*, pp. ccxiii-ccxiv.

2. Gen. 12:6-8; 13:4; 13:18. See also Gen. 25:25 which speaks of Isḥâq's similarly setting up an "altar" unto God.

3. Gen. 28:10, 18-19.

4. See Muḥammad Sulaymân Manṣûrpûrî, *Raḥmatullil-'Âlamîn*, (Urdu text), Delhi, 1980, p. 44.

Ka'ba symbolical of stone worship, nor were the Prophets Ibrâhîm, Isḥâq and Ya'qûb (p.b.t.), by any stretch of the imagination, stone worshippers on account of their erection of stone pillars as "altars unto God".

The dogmatic assertion that the rites connected with the Ka'ba "have no conceivable connection with Abraham, or with the ideas and principles which his descendants would be likely to inherit from him", is a downright misstatement. So far as the Black Stone is concerned, its connection with Ibrâhîm and with the ideas, practices and principles that his descendants were likely to inherit from him, are indubitably demonstrated by the above mentioned testimony of the Old Testament. That the institution of sacrifice also is very much in line with the Abrahamic tradition admits of no doubt, the incident of the intended sacrifice of his son being so clearly narrated in both the Old Testament and the Qur'ân. In this case too the coexistence of Abrahamic rites with idolatrous practices is noticeable. While the unbelieving Arabs used to sacrifice animals on various idol altars at different places, their sacrificing of animals at Minâ at the time of the pilgrimage was only in pursuance of the Abrahamic tradition. It was no sacrificing for any particular idols or their idols in general. Neither any idol nor any altar was there at Minâ or 'Arafât. Indeed the pilgrimage, the staying at Minâ, the standing at 'Arafât and the sacrifices made on the occasion were not done for any idol or idols. These were performed purely in accordance with the Abrahamic tradition. Muir's remarks about sacrifice are somewhat confusing. In attempting to show the supposed connection of Sabeanism with the Makkan religion he states, as mentioned earlier, that as late as the fourth century A.C. sacrifices were offered in Yaman "to the sun, moon and the stars". But while suggesting that the Abrahamic tradition was grafted on the supposedly pre-existing Ka'ba and its rites by an 'Ismâ'ilite tribe he states that "the rites of sacrifice and other ceremonies were now for the first time introduced, or at any rate associated with the memory of Abraham."[1] This statement of Muir's constitutes in fact a confession of the weakness of his theory and an admission that the "rites of sacrifce and other ceremonies" were very much connected with the Abrahamic tradition.

Indeed Muir's third and fourth suggestions, namely, that the Abrahamic tradition was superimposed on the supposedly pre-existent and idolatrous Ka'ba and its rites by an 'Ismâ'ilite tribe subsequently settling there, and

1. Muir, *op.cit.*, p. ccxvi. See also *supra*, p.72.

that this traditon was still more subsequently adopted "by degrees" on the part of the Arab tribes because of the commercial pre-eminence of Makka which attracted them thither, are more illogical and absurd. Both these assumptions run counter to his other statement that so "extensive a homage" to the Ka'ba and its rites "must have its beginnings in an extremely remote age."[1] The Ka'ba and its rites of course go back to a very remote antiquity. And it is also noted that Muir makes a distinction between the prior existence of the Ka'ba and the extensive homage to it on the one hand, and the Abrahamic tradition on the other, which according to him was superimposed on it and its rites. But that does not resolve the inconsistency and difficulty involved in his proposition. If the Arab tribes had since antiquity been paying extensive homage to the Ka'ba and its rites, they would not simply add to these institutions only the name of Ibrâhîm at a subsequent stage — for that is in essence what Muir suggests — just because an Ismâ'îlite tribe came to settle at Makka and imposed Ibrâhîm's name on the existing institutions. In all likelihood, such an illegitimate attempt on the part of an Ismâ'îlite tribe would have met with universal resistance, both from the pre-existing idolatrous population of Makka as well as from the Arab tribes.

Muir seems to have foreseen the difficulty. Hence he recognizes, on the one hand, the fact that the Arab tribes of northern and central Arabia were by and large of Abrahamic origin so much so that both the Jews and the Old Testament spoke of them as Kedarites (i.e., descendants of Ismâ'îl's son Kedar or Qaydar) and, on the other, attempts to make room for his theory in the situation by suggesting that it is "improbable" that the memory of the connection with Ibrâhîm "should have been handed down from the remote age of the patriarch by an independent train of evidence in any particular tribe, or association of tribes". As noted earlier, he suggests that "it is more likely that it was borrowed from the Jews, and kept alive by occasional communication with them."[2] Now, it is highly unlikely that an acknowledgedly conservative people like the Semitic Arabs, who of all people were the most attached to their ancient traditions, remembering their individual genealogies going back to a distant past, would have continued to venerate the Ka'ba and its rites as belonging to their common past, and at the same time forgetting the real fact of their descent from Ibrâhîm. The nature of

1. Muir, *op.cit.*, p. ccxii.
2. See *supra.* p 71.

"living tradition" is not that it should have been handed down "by an independent train of evidence in any particular tribe, or association of tribes." It is handed down from generation to generation by "popular memory", not by the memory or evidence of any particular individual or tribe. It is also just not correct to say, as Muir does, that the Arab tribes having supposedly forgotten their descent from Ibrâhîm "borrowed" the memory "from the Jews" and it was "kept alive by occasional communication with them." No people who had forgotten their common ancestor would accept the ancestor of another people as their ancestor too because the latter stated so, without further and an "independent train of evidence." The fact is that the Arab tribes of central and northern Arabia were not merely on "occasional communication" with the Jews. Throughout the ages till almost the beginning of the Christian era the Jews and the Kedarite tribes of northern and central Arabia were on constant contact with one another and they very much constantly remembered their common descent from Ibrâhîm. But leaving aside all these questions and going with Muir all the way, it is only reasonable to suppose that if the Jews at any point of time reminded the Arab tribes of their descent from their common patriarch Ibrâhîm, they would also have been told that that patriarch was no polytheist and that the (supposedly) pre-existing Ka'ba and its rites had no connection with him. Therefore the Arab tribes would not assoctiate the Ka'ba and its rites with the memory of Ibrâhîm even when they were reminded of their actual ancestor. But, since the Arab tribes, by Muir's admission and by all the available evidence did in fact associate the Ka'ba and its rites with Ibrâhîm for long before the coming of Islam, a natural corollary of Muir's suggestion is that the Jews, when reminding them of Ibrâhîm, must also have told them that the Ka'ba and its rites were of Abrahamic origin.

The unreasonableness of Muir's proposition does not end here. He says that the Ismâ'îlite tribe, when it came to settle at Makka, brought "in its train the patriarchal legend of Abrahamic origin" and engrafted "it on the local superstitions." Thus by Muir's own statement, when the Ismâ'îlite tribe came to Makka, they had not forgotten their Abrahamic origin. It is therefore reasonable to add that they had also not lost sight of the fact that Ibrâhîm was no polytheist. Hence they would not have desecrated the sacred memory of their ancestor by associating it with the (supposedly) pre-existing and polytheistic Ka'ba and its rites, the more so because these institutions had long been commanding the homage of the Arabs. In such a state, if they

intended to integrate themselves with the Arab tribes, or vice versa, they would have simply allowed the Abrahamic memory to remain in the background and would have accepted the Ka'ba and its rites as they were; for by so doing they would not have lost anything, neither their domicile nor the profitable trade of Makka. Since they did not do so, but accepted, as it is said, the Ka'ba and its rites as of Abrahamic origin, notwithstanding their having retained the memory of their descent from Ibrâhîm, and since also the Arab tribes accepted the Ka'ba and its rites as of Abrahamic origin, notwithstanding their constant touch with the collateral branch of Ibrâhîm's descendents, the Jews, the natural conclusion is that they did so because they *knew* that the Ka'ba and its rites *were* of Abrahamic origin. Thus a rational analysis of even Muir's theory of subsequent migration to and settlement at Makka by an Ismâ'îlite tribe, together with the other assumptions he makes and the facts he admits, leads to the unavoidable conclusion that the Ka'ba and its rites were of Abrahamic origin.

(b) About the Old Testament evidence

Muir's above discussed theory and assumptions proceed from his understanding of the information contained in Gen. 21:21. He says: "Hagar, when cast forth by Abraham, dwelt with her son in the wilderness of Paran, to the north of Arabia."[1] The above mentioned passage of the Genesis simply says that Ismâ'îl and his mother "dwelt in the wilderness of Paran". The clause, "to the north of Arabia", is Muir's own statement based understandably on the identification of Paran made by other Christitian writers and exegetes of the Bible. Paran is mentioned in connection with other events at three other places in the Old Testament.[2] But in none of all these places it is clear what exactly is the locality meant by the name Paran. The answer to the question where, according to Genesis 21:21, Hajar and Ismâ'îl settled thus depends on a correct identification of Paran.

The subject was in fact exhaustively dealt with by Syed Ahmed Khan Bahadur shortly after the appearance of Muir's work.[3] As the arguments on either side have not advanced much since that time, it would be worthwhile

1. Muir, *op.cit.*, p.cxi. Muir mistakenly cites in his footnote Gen. 21:25. It ought to be Gen. 21:21.

2. See Gen. 14:6; Num. 10:12; Num. 12:16.

3. Syed Ahmed Khan Bahadur, *Essay on the Historical Geography of Arabia*, London, Trubner & Co., 1869.

to recapitulate the main points made by him, adding to them such other facts or points as bear on the subject. He drew attention to the fact that the early Muslim geographers speak of three different places bearing the same name of Paran, namely, first, the wilderness where Makka now stands, together with the mountainous region adjacent to it; secondly, those mountains and a village that are situated in Eastern Egypt or Arabia Petra and; thirdly, a district in Samarkand.[1] He further pointed out that the Christian scholars and exegetes advance three different identifications of Paran. One view is that it comprised a vast area extending "from the northern boundary of Beer-Sheba as far as Mount Sinai"; the second view is that it was identical with Beer-Sheba, which was also called Kadesh; and the third view is that it was the wilderness lying on the "western slopes of Mount Sinai."[2] As regards these identifications the first two are obviously wrong, because the descriptions of the Old Testament itself clearly show Paran to be a distinct and different area, not a vast wilderness including many others such as the first identification would suggest, and also different from Beer-Sheba/Kadesh.[3] The third identification, that of Paran being a locality on the western slopes of Mount Sinai, tallies with one of the Parans mentioned by the Muslim geographers, but the locality was in all likelihood not known by the name of Paran at that time. For Moses, in the course of his journey with the Israelites from Egypt to Sinai, does not make any mention of Paran although he passed through the same locality and mentioned the places on the way. Most probably the place came to be known as Paran at a period subsequent to that of Moses on account of the settlement there of a branch of Banû Phârân, a Qahtanite tribe.[4]

None of these three localities, however, could have been the domicile of Hâjar and Ismâ'îl. For, in the first place, no local traditions exist to the effect that they settled in any of those localities. Secondly, though Moses and his followers are stated to have proceeded further from Sinai and having passed through "Taberah", "Kibrothhattaavah" and "Hazeroth" next halted at the

1. *Ibid.*, p. 74. See also Yâqût, *Mu'jam al-Buldân*, under Fârân.

2. Syed Ahmed, *op.cit.*, p.76, citing Kitto's *Cyclopaedia of the Bible* and *The Peoples' Bible Dictionary*.

3. Syed Ahmed, *op.cit.*, pp. 77-79. See also Gen. 14:5-7; Deut. 33:2; Hab. 3:3; Num. 10:12; 13:1-3, 6.

4. Syed Aḥmad, op. cit., p. 85.

wilderness of Paran,[1] the exact course taken by them is not clear. The Christian scholars themselves suggest as many as five different directions. Moreover, their statement that the descendants of Ismâ'îl spread over the area "from 'Shur to Havilah', or across the Arabian peninsula, from the borders of Egypt to the mouths of the Euphrates" is based on an incorrect identification of "Havilah" mentioned in Gen. 25:18. They, guessing on a slender similarity in sound, identify Havilah with Aval or Auwal of the Bahrayn islands. In reality, as Syed Ahmed points out, Havilah is a locality in the vicinity of Yaman, lying at Lat. 17° 30' N and Log. 42° 36, E, and called after Havilah, one of the sons of Joktan (Qaḥṭân).[2] It is thus evident "that the Ishmaelites settled in the wide tract of land extending from the northern frontiers of Yemen to the southern borders of Syria. This place now bears the name of Hedjaz, and it is identical with Paran", as mentioned by the Muslim geographers.[3] It is further noteworthy that an Arabic version of the Samaritan Pentateuch edited by R. Kuenen and published at Lugduni Batavorum, 1851, says in a note that Pharan and Hejaz are one and the same place.[4]

Thirdly, a close look at Gen. 21:14-15 would make it clear that the two consecutive passages do not really speak of one and the same occasion. The statement in Gen. 21:14 that Hâjar "wandered in the wilderness of Beer-Sheba" does not mean that she wandered only there and proceeded no farther. Nor does the statement in Gen. 21:15, "And the water was spent in the bottle, and she cast the child under one of the shrubs", mean that the incident took place in or in the vicinity of Beer-Sheba. Nor does it mean that the same water in the bottle with which she had left her home "was spent" and therefore she was obliged to "cast the child under one of the shrubs". Beer-Sheba was a place well known to her, Ibrâhîm having lived there with her for long. There were also a number of wells scattered over the region and dug by different persons, as the Old Testament very clearly states at a number of places. The well at Beer-Sheba itself was dug by Ibrâhîm. All these could not have been unknown to Hâjar. She could therefore have obtained further water, after a little search, from any of the many wells in the area. In fact the Old Testament writer here describes, in two very short and consecutive

1. See Exod. 15:32; 17:8; 18:5; 19:2 and Num. 10:12; 11:34; 12:16; 13:26 and 14:25.
2. Syed Ahmad, *op.cit.*, p. 80. See also Gen. 10:29.
3. Syed Ahmad, *op.cit.*, p. 80.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 75-76.

passages, the long and arduous wanderings made by Hâjar, of which the beginning was her wanderings in Beer-Sheba and the last stage was at such a place where she could get no water, nor replenish her bottle in any way. So in utter distress and despair she cast the child under one of the shrubs. The two passages speak of two different stages of her wanderings, separated by not too small gaps of time and place.

Fourthly, the causes and circumstances that led to Hâjar's and Ismâ'îl's banishment from home, as described in the Old Testament, also indicate that they travelled to a land quite away from the area where Sârah and Ibrâhîm continued to live. According to the Genesis, Sârah wanted that Ismâ'îl should not be heir with her son Isḥâq. So also, according to the Genesis, it was God's plan that Ismâ'îl and his descendants should settle in and populate another land. The Genesis very graphically describes the situation thus:

"11. And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight because of his son."

"12. And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of the bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called."

"13. And also the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation, because he *is* thy seed."

"14. And Abraham rose up early in the morning, took bread, and a bottle of water, and gave *it* unto Hagar,..."etc.[1]

Thus it is very clear from the Genesis that it was not really because of Sârah's desire but decisively because of God's plan and assurance of a fruitful future for Ismâ'îl communicated to Ibrâhaîm, and His command to him, that he banished Hâjar and Ismâ'îl to a different land. God's words to Ibrâhîm, "for in Isaac shall thy seed be called", was a consolation as well as an assurance that the banishment of Ismâ'îl did not mean an end to, or a constriction of the line of Ibrâhîm's descendants. The statement, "in Isaac shall thy seed be called" meant that Ibrâhîm's progeny will continue there where he was at that time, through Isḥâq; whereas the other statement was an empahsis on the fact that Ismâ'îl *was* his seed ("he *is* thy seed) but his progeny will be multiplied and made into a nation in another region. By the very nature of this plan of God's (and Sârah's desire to exclude Ismâ'îl from his father's immediate possessions was itself part of God's plan), Hâjar and

1. Gen. 21:11-14.

Ismâ'îl could not have been settled in any place in the region of Beer-Sheba and Sinai, which were very much then within the sphere of Ibrâhîm's and Sârah's activities. Hâjar and Ismâ'îl could only have been, and were indeed consigned to a far-away and unsettled land. The Paran/Fârân mentioned in the Genesis as their domicile could not simply have been any Paran in and around Beer-Sheba and Sinai, as the Christian scholars imagine.

Fifthly, as regards the exact location of Hâjar's and Ismâ'îl's domicile Genesis 21 also furnishes a clue. Thus, when Hâjar in her utter distress and helplessness prayed unto God and also the child Ismâ'îl cried out of hunger and thirst, God responded to them. Says the Genesis:[1]

"17. And God heard the voice of the lad; and the Angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said unto her, What aileth thee, Hagar? fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he *is*."

"18. Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hand; for I will make him a great nation."

"19. And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad drink."

Thus God provided Hâjar and Ismâ'îl with a well of water, *on the spot* where they were ("God has heard the voice of the lad where he *is*.") Hâjar did not have to look around and walk any distance to find the well. "God opened her eyes", i.e., God made her open her eyes,[2] "and she saw a well of water." It was not simply a temporary relief. It was God's especial gift for them to be the means of their sustenance and settlement there in accordance with His plan and promise to "make a nation" out of Ismâ'îl. This divinely provided well cannot be identfied with any well in Beer-Sheba and its surrounding region for the simple reason that none of these wells is mentioned in the Old Testament as God-given. On The contrary they are very distinctly described as the work of human hand. Nor is there any local tradition pointing to the existence there, now or in the past, of any divenely caused well. To attempt to identify the well given by God to Ismâ'îl and Hâjar with any of the wells in the Beer-Sheba region would be an affront to the clear wording and purport of the text of the Genesis. This well is unmistakably the Zamzam well by the side of the Ka'ba. Ever since the time of

1. Gen. 21:17-19.

2. Obviously Hâjar was deeply absorbed in prayer with her eyes closed.

Hâjar and Ismâ'îl it has continued to be a perennial source of water for the descendants of Ismâ'îl and others who repair there, except for a short period of human tampering with it.

Last but not least, the name of Makka, which is also called Bakka in the Qur'ân,[1] finds mention in the Psalm of David, together with the well too. Thus Psalm 84:6 says:

"Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools."

'Baca' in the above passage is clearly Bakka of the Qur'ân, and the well spoken of is the well of Zamzam. It is also noteworthy that ancient works on history and georaphy make mention of floods being caused at Makka by occasional heavy rains, a feature not quite unknown even in modern times — thus completing the identification with Makka — "the rain also filleth the pools."

Thus, despite some obvious discrepancies in the description of the Genesis,[2] it is in consonance with all the essential features in the Qur'ânic and Islamic accounts; and they combinedly prove that Hâjar and Ismâ'îl were settled at Makka, according to the Divine plan and provision.

(c) *Ismâ'îl or Isḥâq?* (p.b.t.)

Just as the orientalists deny that Hâjar and Ismâ'îl were settled at Makka, in order to suggest that the Ka'ba and its rites have no connection with Ibrâhîm, similarly they deny that Ismâ'îl was the object of the intended sacrifice by Ibrâhîm, in order to suggest that Isḥâq was the "child of promise" and favour. And just as being faced with the undeniable fact that the Ismâ'îlites were indeed settled at Makka and in Arabia generally for long prior to the coming of Islam, the orientalists suggest the theory of subsequent migration by the Ismâ'îlites to Makka and the surrounding region, similarly, being confronted with the equally incontrovertible fact that the descendants of Ismâ'îl did indeed multiply greatly and flourished as a great nation, as promised by God, they (the orientalists) resort to the theory of "temporal" and "spiritual" blessings. Thus the Bible exegetes as well as the orientalists

1. Q. 3:96.

2. One such obvious discrepancy relates to the age of Ismâ'îl at the time of his banishment. Genesis 21:5-9 would show that he was about 16 years old at the time, while Gen. 21:16, 19, 20 would show that he was a "child" and "lad" at the time. The latter view is the correct one.

suggest that "God's promise of *temporal prosperity*" in favour of Ismâ'îl was fulfilled in his twelve sons and their multitudinous descendants, but Isḥâq was the obeject of both "temporal" and "spiritual" blessings. Apart from this premise of the orientalists, their main objection to Ismâ'îl's being the object of the intended sacrifice is based on Genesis 22, particularly 22:2.

The distinction between things "temporal" and things "spiritual" is essentially a medieval European concept arising out of the relationships between the "Empire" and the "Papacy". According to this concept "temporal" matters belonged to the jurisdiction of the Emperor, while "spiritual" matters fell within the dominion of God (Pope). This dichotomy underlies the modern western distinction made between "religion" and "state". Whatever the merits of the concept, a strict regard to it and to chronology should have prevented its application to God's dealings in dim antiquity with the sons of Ibrâhîm.

The premise is, however, not at all borne out by the facts mentioned in the Old Testament. A cursory look at the relevant passages should make it clear that analogous promises were made in respect of both Ismâ'îl and Isḥâq. There is nothing which was promised to the latter but not to the former. Rather, on a careful reading, it would appear that promises made in respect of Ismâ'îl were earlier and repeated a number of times even after Isḥâq's birth. It is thus not understandable where in the Bible do the exegetes and the orientalists get the impression that Ismâ'îl was promised only temporal prosperity and Isḥâq was promised both aspects of it, temporal as well as spiritual.

To mention only a few instances. Thus, long before either Ismâ'îl or Isḥâq was born, Ibrâhîm received God's blessings on his progeny. Says the Gensis 12:

"Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee. 2. And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: 3. And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee; and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. 4. So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram *was* seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran."[1]

1. Gen. 12:1-4.

The same promise was repeated in more specific terms when Hâjar conceived Ismâ'îl. It was God Who named her son Ismâ'îl. The relevant and very significant passage runs thus:[1]

"And the angel of the LORD said unto her, I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude. 11. And the angel of the LORD said unto her, Behold, thou *art* with a son, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael; because the LORD hath heard thy affliction."

Thirdly, God's "covenant" was in fact made, together with a repetition of the promise of blessings, with Ibrâhîm and Ismâ'îl well before the birth of Isḥâq. Ibrâhîm was then ninety-nine years old and Ismâ'îl, thirteen. The covenat was made and sealed with the token of circumcision which was performed by Ibrâhîm and Ismâ'îl and that also before the birth of Isḥâq. And it was on that occasion that God changed the patriarch's name from "Abram" to Abraham (Ibrâhîm). The text runs as follows:

"And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I *am* the Almighty God; walk before me and be thou perfect. 2. And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly. 3. And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him saying, 4. As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. 5. Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee... 7. And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after me in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee... 9. And God said unto Abraham, thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations. 10. This *is* my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after me; Every man child among you shall be circumcised. 11. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you...24. And Abraham *was* ninety years old and nine, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. 25. And Ishmael his son *was* thirteen years old, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. 26. In the selfsame day was Abraham circumcised, and Ishmael his son. 27. And all the men of his house... were circumcised with him."[2]

Thus God's "covenant" with Ibrâhîm and his "seed" Ismâ'îl was made and

1. Gen. 16:10-11.
2. Gen. 17:1-5, 7, 9-11, 24-27.

sealed with the token of circumcision before Isḥâq's birth. In fact it was on that occasion that God gave Ibrâhîm the good news of another son for him through Sârah, adding that the covenant would be made with him too. Note the text.[1]

"15. And God said unto Abraham, As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sârah *shall* her name *be*. 16. And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her: yea I will bless her, and she shall be *a mother* of nations; kings of people shall be of her... 19. And God said, Sârah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, *and* with his seed after him... 21. But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sârah shall bear unto thee at this time in the next year."

It should be noted that God's statements in the above passage, "and I will establish my covenant with him" (i.e. Isḥâq, Gen. 17:19) and "But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sârah shall bear unto thee..." (Gen. 17:21), are in the nature of a reiteration of the covenant already made with Ibrâhîm and his seed "after him in their generations for an everlasting covenant", as mentioned in the passage preceding the above one (i.e. in Gen. 17:7, 9-11). The statements in Gen. 17:19 and 21 are an assurance given to Ibrâhîm by God that when born, Isḥâq too will be admitted in the covenant that had already been made with Ibrâhîm and sealed by his and son Ismâ'îl's circumcision on the same day. In no way can the statements be taken to mean that God cancelled that covenant or indicated that He would be making a fresh covenant with Isḥâq abrogating or modifying the previously made one with Ibrâhîm. That the statements in question were meant to be a continuation and confirmation of the covenant in respect of Isḥâq is further clear form three other facts, namely, (a) that the promises made regarding Ismâ'îl and his progeny were repeated after Isḥâq's birth;[2] (b) that Isḥâq, when born, was simply initiated into the covenant by Ibrâhîm by cirmucising him on the eighth day of his birth, as God had directed;[3] and (c) that no further act was done to indicate that God's covenant was henceforth exclusively meant for Isḥâq and his descendants. The text relating to Isḥâq's birth and initiation into the covenant runs as follows;[4]

1. Gen. 17:15-16, 19, 21.
2. Gen. 17:20; 21:13; 21:18.
3. See Gen. 15:12.
4. Gen. 21:1-5.

"And the Lord visited Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did unto Sarah as he had spoken. 2. For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him. 3. And Abraham called the name of his son that was born unto him, whom Sarah bare to him, Isaac. 4. And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac being eight days old, as God had commanded him. 5. And Abraham was an hundred years old when his son Isaac was born unto him."

Thus was Isḥâq initiated into the "covenant" already made with Ibrâhîm by the performance of his (Isḥâq's) circumcision on the eighth day of his birth, as commanded by God. There is nothing here or elsewhere to suggest that God had made a separate and exclusive covenant with Isḥâq abrogating or modifying the one previously made with his father. In fact, it was only the covenant made by God with Ibrâhîm into which he and his first son Ismâ'îl had been initiated earlier by the performance of circumcision on the same day, while Isḥâq was initiated a year later, when he was born.

That the promises and blessings were made equally for Ismâ'îl and Isḥâq would be clear from the following:

(1) *Before Ibrâhîm had any son he was promised by God*:

(a) "And I will make thee a great nation... in thee shall families of the earth be blessed." (Gen. 12:2-3)

(b) "... Unto thy seed I will give this land / Canaan /." (Gen. 12:7)

(c) that his "seed" shall be as numerous as the stars in the heaven. (Gen. 15:5)

(d) God said to Ibrâhîm: "Unto thy seed I have given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates." (Gen. 15:18)

(2) *After the birth of Ismâ'îl and at the time of making the covenant God promised Ibrâhîm*:

"I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after me, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession;..." (Gen. 17:8)

(3) *After the birth of both Ismâ'îl and Isḥâq, but without specific reference to either, Ibrâhîm was promised by God*:

"... I will bless the, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which *is* upon the sea shore;... And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed..." (Gen. 22:17-18)

(4) *God blessed*:

Hâjar: (Gen. 16:10-11)

Sârah (Gen. 17:15-16)

(5) *God gave the good news of a son to*

Hâjar (Gen. 16:10-11)

Sârah (Gen. 17:16,19)

(6) *God named*:

Ismâ'îl (Gen. 16:11)

Isḥâq (Gen. 17:19)

(7) *God promised to multiply the progeny of*:

Hâjar (Gen. 16:10)

Sârah (17:16)

(8) *God's promises in repect of*

Ismâ'îl: "Will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation." (Gen. 17:21)

"I will make him a great nation." (Gen. 21:18. See also Gen. 21:13)

Isḥâq: No such promises.

It should be clear from the above that analogous promises were made in respect of both Ismâ'îl and Isḥâq and both were equally intiated into the covenant made by God with Ibrâhîm. There is nothing to show that the elder and the first born was blessed only temporally and the younger son was blessed both temporally and spiritually. The sequence of events narrated in the Old Testament brings out two important facts. It shows, in the first place, that God made His covenant with Ibrâhîm when he was 99 years old and his son Ismâ'îl was 13 years old. Secondly, it was after the making of the covenant that God gave the good news of another son for Ibrâhîm through Sârah. These two broad facts fit in well with the Qur'ânic account which says that God specially blessed Ibrâhîm and made the covenant with him after he had passed the tests, including the test of sacrificing his son, and that it was after that event that God gave him the good news of another son for him through Sârah.

An apparent conflict in the two accounts is created, however, by what the Genesis says about the intended sacrificing of his son by Ibrâhîm. Thus, after having spoken of God's making the covenant with Ibrâhîm, of his and his son Ismâ'îl's circumcision on the same day, of the birth and circumcision of Isḥâq, it proceeds to deal with the incident of the sacrifice and states as follows:

"And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham,... 2. And he said, Take now thy *son*, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of." (Gen. 22:1-2)

On the basis of this passage the orientalists deny that Ismâ'îl was the object of the intended sacrifice and assert that it was Isḥâq who was offered for sacrifice. But this particular statement of the Genesis 22:2 suffers from an obvious contradiction. It says "thine only son Isaac." Now, at no point of time in Ibrâhîm's life was Isḥâq his *only* son; for the latter was born when Ibrâhîm's first son Ismâ'îl was fourteen years old and both he and Isḥâq were alive when their father Ibrâhîm died at the age of 175. Clearly, then, an error has occurred in the statement. Either the expression *only* should not have been there or the name of the son ought to have been Ismâ'îl instead of Isḥâq. But the expression *only son* occurs twice more in the chapter, at Gen. 22:12 and 22:16; at both of which places God expresses His especial pleasure over Ibrâhîm's not having withheld his *only son* from Him, and blesses him particularly on that account, stating: "I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven,... And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice."[1] There can be no doubt, therefore, that the *only son* of Ibrâhîm was asked and offered for sacrifice. It is noteworthy that at these two latter places the name of the son is not mentioned. Clearly, then, the error *is* in the writing of the name of the son in this account of the Genesis. The name ought to have been Ismâ'îl, instead of Isḥâq, who for fourteen years was the *only son* of Ibrâhîm. The mistake in the writing of the son's name in Gensis 22:2 occurred most probably not at the hand of the Bible author but at the hand of a subsequent scribe or compiler, who altered the text in favour of Isḥâq. If the mistake is rectified by writing the name of Ismâ'îl in place of Isḥâq the whole chapter of the Genesis would be relieved of the incongruity and the account would fit in well with the nature of

1. Gen. 22:17-18.

promise made earlier by God in respect of Ismâ'îl in Gen. 16:10 saying: "I will multiply thy seed", and again in 17:20 in a slightly modified form, "I will multiply him exceedingly, etc". The similarity of this blessing with the blessing contained in Gen. 22:17, "I will multiply thy seed" and uttered to Ibrâhîm is striking. The appropriateness of this particular blessing for Ismâ'îl is further indicated by what actually came to pass. For though Prophets and princes arose from among Isḥâq's descendants, as God had promised to his mother Sârah, it was in Ismâ'îl's descendants that God's promise of multiplying his "seed" exceedingly was admirably fulfilled. Ismâ'îl's descendants became far more numerous and spread over a far wider area than did the descendants of Isḥâq.

That Ismâ'îl should have been the name of the *only son* in Gen. 22 is obvious from the context and sequence of events described in the Genesis itself. In the first place, it would be to no purpose that God should proceed to test the depth of Ibrâhîm's faith after He had made the covenant with the patriarch, promised him all the blessings, given him Ismâ'îl and Isḥâq and had also abundantly blessed them too. Rather, it is only in the fitness of things that God should have tested the faith of Ibrâhîm before bestowing upon him all the favours and blessings and, above all, before making an everlasting covenant with him. It is also noteworthy that the blessing contained in Gen. 22:17-18 adds, "because thou hast obeyed my voice." The special blessings of God were thus bestowed upon Ibrâhîm *after* he had passed God's test, not before it. Secondly, it would have been also very unkind and inconsistent on God's part to have asked Ibrâhîm to sacrifice Isḥâq too, after having commanded the patriarch to banish his first-born to a distant land, having also consoled him over his grief over the matter and, further, after having assured him that "in Isaac shall thy seed be called", that is, continued in the region where they were. Thus the internal evidence of Genesis 22 and the overall sequence of events and reason combinedly suggest that it was Ibrâhîm's first-born and the *only son*, Ismâ'îl, who was asked and offered for sacrifice.

The orientalists have of course their theories to explain the expression "only son" occurring in Gen. 22. The most frequently made plea is based expressly or implicitly on the following statement in the New Testament:[1]

"For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, and the other by a freewoman. But he *who was* of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman *was* by promise."

1. Galatians 4:22-23.

It has been pointed out earlier that the expression "bondmaid" or "bondwoman" applied in the Bible to Ibrâhîm's wife Hâjar is incorrect and is the result of spite for Ismâ'îl.[1] Particulalry after her marriage with Ibrâhîm, as the evidence of the Bible itself shows — "And Sarai... gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife"[2] — she attained the rank of a duly married wife to a Prophet. Ismâ'îl was therefore a legitimate son born in wedlock. Any suggestion of his being an illegitimate child and therefore not to be reckoned a son to Ibrâhîm would be preposterous, an affront to the memory of the father of Prophets Ibrâhîm and directly contrary to the repeated statements in the Old Testament that Ismâ'îl was Ibrâhîm's "seed" and "son". The "son" whom God blessed repeatedly, repeatedly promised to "make him a nation", to "multiply his seed exceedingly" and to cause "twelve princes" to be begotten by him, cannot simply be regarded as a non-entity except by one who has no faith in the Bible nor in the words of God. Moreover, according to the Bible the right of the first-born belongs to Ismâ'îl. The Old Testament says that if a person has two wives, one "hated" and the other "beloved", and if he has two or more sons by these two wives and if the first-born is by the wife that is hated, the right of the first-born is his and he should get double the portion of the other sons in the inheritance.[3] It may once again be stressed that the claim that Isḥâq was the exclusive recipient of God's "spiritual" blessing is totally wrong.

Whatever might be the distinction implied in the above quoted statement of the New Testament, neither was Ismâ'îl born only "after the flesh", nor was Isḥâq born only "by promise". Both of them were born of father and mother. The mothers of both of them, Hâjar and Sârah, were blessed by God. Both of them were promised and given the good tidings of the coming of their respective sons by God. The names of both the sons were selected and communicated to their mothers by God. Both of them were thus born "by promise" as well as "after the flesh". If Isḥâq was more "by promise" because God promised him to Ibrâhîm as a reward for his proven faith, as both the Old Testament and the Qur'ân show, it was all the more reason why God would not have asked Ibrâhîm to sacrifice Isḥâq because he was given as a reward and a favour. Finally, it may be pointed out that no trace is to be found in the religious ceremonies of the descendants of Isḥâq of his suppo-

1. See *supra*, p.33.
2. Gen. 16:3.
3. Deut. 21:15-17.

sedly having been offered for sacrifice. On the other hand, the descendants of Ismâ'îl and the followers of the Abrahamic religion all over the world commemorate the event every year on the tenth day of the last month of the Arabic calendar. It is also they, unlike the others, who invoke in their daily compulsory and optional prayers blessings upon Ibrâhîm and his progeny (not excluding the descendants of Isḥâq), thus demonstrating their faith in what God said to Ibrâhîm: "And I will bless them that bless thee,... and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."[1]

1. Gen. 12:3.

CHAPTER IV

ON THE MATERIALISTIC INTERPRETATION OF THE RISE OF ISLAM

I. THE EARLIER EXPLANATIONS

At the very outset of his work Watt explains his standpoint and declares that he writes "as a professing monotheist" and does not "regard the adoption of a materialistic outlook as implicit in historical impartiality"; but that the need for a "fresh life of Muḥammad has been felt for sometime" because "in the last half-century or so" historians had become "more conscious of the material factors underlying history." Even those, he further says, who like himself denied "that such factors entirely determine the course of events have to admit their importance." He therefore claims that the "special feature" of his biography of Muḥammad (ﷺ) is "that it pays fuller attention to these material factors and attempts to answer questions that have hardly been raised in the past."[1]

Thus by his own admission he follows the trend which specially characterized historical writing in the first half of the twentieth century, namely, paying greater attention to the material factors underlying history". How far he breaks new ground in his biography of the Prophet may be seen if we refer briefly to the principal economic interpretations of the rise of the Prophet and Islam advanced by his predecessors.

The first notable theory in this respect was that of Hubert Grimme who in 1892 came forward with a straight socialistic explanation of the rise of Islam, treating it as simply the outcome of the usual struggle between the "haves" and "have-nots."[2] The defects and inappropriateness of this rather simplistic interpretation were quickly and decisively pointed out by C.

1. Watt, *M. at M.*, Introduction, X-XI. Even such careful reservations about his materialistic approach did not save Watt the disapproval of the more pious of his compeers, one of whom accused the "Episcopalean clergyman" of Marxism. (G.H. Bousquet's remarks cited in Maxime Rodinson, "A critical survey of modern studies on Muḥammad", *Studies on Islam*, ed. Marlin Swartz, O.U.P., 1981, p. 47.) Rodinson himself, being professedly a materialist, praises Watt for the "sharpness" and "clarity" of his conclusions (*ibid.*, 46, 47) and adopts in his work, *Moḥammed*, the lines of approach suggested by Watt.

2. Hubert Grimme, *Mohammed* (Darstellungen etc., Band 7), Vol. I., Munster, 1892, Ch. I., especially p. 14.

Snouk Hurgronje[1] whose trenchant analysis thenceforth put the orientalists on their guard against that interpretation. About the same time attention was being paid to the fact, which is evident from the sources, that the Makkans were mainly a community of traders and merchants for at least several decades prior to the rise of Islam. This fact was more specially brought to notice by J. Wellhausen who ascribed Makka's greatness and importance mainly to the ability of the Quraysh "who understood better than others how to draw water out of their own well, and make their neighbours' waters flow in their channels."[2] The same fact was highlighted also by C.C. Torrey who, concentrating on the commercial terms and figures of speech in the Qur'ân suggestes that it appeared in an atmosphere of commerce and high finance.[3] This renewed emphasis on the commercial character of pre-Islamic Makkan society, together with the general trend with the orientalists to emphasize the influence of Judaism and Christianity on Arabian life, led to the growth of another line of thought, namely, that paganism was becoming unfashionable and inadequate in satsifying the religious need of the more advanced Makkans and that "devout believers in Al-Lât and Al-'Uzzâ were thought by those who had been in the great world to be behind the times."[4]

Reflecting all these views Margoliouth wrote in the early twentieth century that "the Meccan heads of houses are represented as forming a joint-stock company for the purpose of foreign trade, the profits on each occasion being divided proportionately among the investors, and by them expended or hoarded, or invested in fresh speculations..."[5] He further suggested that because of this "healthy" nature of the Makkan society Muḥammad's (ﷺ) mission "was a failure" there whereas it "readily found a hearing" at Madina "which had been suffering for years from the curse of civil war."[6] Margoliouth concluded:[7]

1. C. Snouk Hurgronje, "Une nouvelle biographie de Moḥammed" *R.H.R.*, 1894, pp. 48-70, reproduced in Hurgronje, *Selected Works etc.*, Leiden, 1957, pp. 109-149.

2. J. Wellhausen, *Reste Arabischen Heidentums*, 2nd edition, Berlin, 1897, p. 93, quoted in Margoliouth, *op.cit.*, p. 32.

3. C.C. Torrey, *The Commercial-Theological Terms of the Koran*, Leiden, 1892.

4. Margoliouth, *op.cit.*, p. 24.

5. *Ibid.*, 30-31.

6. *Ibid.*, 31.

7. *Ibid.*, 44.

"Had Meccah continued to increase in wealth and power under her sagacious leaders, it is not probable that her people would have remained satisfied with a religious system that was thought barbarous in the countries whence she would have been compelled to obtain science and learning. Yet the fact that the old religion was the source of her material prosperity would have rendered the substitution for it of either Christianity or Judaism impracticable. The ideal solution of the problem was clearly that discovered in time by Mohammed of superseding both the enlightened religions; retaining the old source of wealth, but in a system which, so far from being backward, was in advance of the cult of the Roman Empire."

It is of course true the Makkans were mainly a commercial community on the eve of the rise of Islam; but there seems to be an over-emphasis on this fact in the above-mentioned writings, particularly in that of C.C. Torrey. It must be pointed out that in so far as the Qur'ân is concerned, agricultural terms and imageries are no less numerous and vivid in it than what is called the "commercial-theological" terms.[1] The whole worldy life is likened in the Qur'ân to a cultivating field for securing provision for the life in the hereafter.[2] The doctrine of monotheism, the central theme of the Qur'ân, is sought to be brought home by repeated references to Allah's grace and bounty in sending down rains from the sky and thereby enlivening the barren earth and causing plants, fruits and corns to grow out of it. Even paradise is generally depicted as a well-laid garden with all kinds of delicious fruit-trees and streams running through them. As Allah brings forth plants out of the earth, so will He raise the dead from it on the resurrection day.[3] Even the act of procreation and therefore the process of continuing human race is likened to cultivating one's own field.[4] On the basis of such expressions and statements one could state equally confidently that the Qur'ân appeared against an essentially and predominantly agricultural background!

That would however be an another misleading conclusion; for over-emphasis on any single aspect of the information contained in the Qur'ân or other sources, to the neglect of the other aspects, is bound to yield an incorrect or distorted picture of the total situation. This is illustrated equally well

1. See for instance Q. 2:71; 2:223; 2:264-266; 6:136-138; 6:141; 13:3-4; 16:11; 18:32-42; 26:146-148; 34:15-16; 36:33-36; 44:25-27; 48:29; 50:7-11; 56:63-64; 68:22; 71:11-12; 78:16, etc.

2. Q. 42:20.

3. Q. 35:9; 50:11.

4. Q. 2:223.

by Margoliouth's statement noted above. Its main drawback is that it suggests the same fact as the cause of the rise of Islam on the one hand, and as the cause of its "failure" at Makka on the other. For Margoliouth says that because Makka continued to flourish as a commercial community Muḥammad (ﷺ) only effected an "ideal solution" of the resultant socio-religious anomaly by devising a "system" which retained "the old source of wealth" but which "was in advance of the cult of the Roman Empire"; but his mission "was a failure" there because it was a "healthy" commercial community! Such contradiction is only indicative of the basic incorrectness of both the premise and the conclusion. Neither was the Makkan society on the eve of the rise of Islam as healthy as Margoliouth imagines it to be, nor did Muḥammad (ﷺ) just effect an adjustment of the imbalance between Makka's socio-economic growth on the one hand and its primitive religious system on the other by simply devising a system in which he retained the old source of wealth. If Muḥammad's (ﷺ) role was only that of responding to the demand of Makka's socio-economic organism, it would not have rejected and ousted him as Margoliouth recognizes it did.

Shortly after the appearance of Margoliouth's work C.H. Becker gave an avowedly economic explanation not so much of the rise of Islam as of the expansion of its political dominion over the neighbouring lands. Drawing attention to the instances of migration in a rather distant past of several south Arabian tribes to Madina, Syria and Mesopotamia (Iraq) and to the decline in the public waterworks in south Arabia, Becker suggested that the Arab expansion in the seventh Christian century "was the last great Semitic migration connected with the economical decline of Arabia." It was, according to him, "the final stage in a process of development extending over centuries." "Hunger and avarice, not religion," he wrote, "were the impelling forces for the new expansion," but Islam supplied "the essential unity and power" for the purpose. It gave the movement "a party cry and an organization."[1]

There are obvious weaknesses in Becker's theory. It totally neglects the economic and commercial growth of Makka on the eve of the rise of Islam, generalizes the not too well established economic decline of south Arabia in the distant past and applies it to the whole of the peninsula. It also ignores the long time-gap between the migration of the south Arabian tribes to the

1. *The Cambridge Medieval History*, Vol. II (ed. H.M. Gwatkin and J.P. Whitney), Cambridge, 1913, pp. 330-332.

north and the Arab expansion of the seventh century. Nor does Becker adequately prove the premise that there was a sharp economic decline all over Arabia immediately prior to the rise of Islam. Moreover, this latter expansion was not strictly a migration. If it is true, as Becker states, that it was not the religion of Islam, but only its political sway, which was disseminated first, then it is equally true that that political sway was not a migration either. In the initial stage there was even the prohibition upon the Arabs' settling in the conquered lands. Becker's theory agrees, however, with Grimme's socialistic interpretation in one respect. It assumes all the tribes of the entire Arabian peninsula as the "have-nots" who preyed upon the lands of their neighbours, the "haves". It also savours of the assumption common to Muir, Margoliouth and others that the Prophet consciously and ambitiously aimed at political union of Arabia which "unity and power" provided the basis for the "new expansion."

Becker's suggestion of a general economic decline for Arabia on the eve of the rise of Islam does not appear to have found wide acceptance with the scholars. On the contrary the Wellhausen-Torrey-Margoliouth emphasis on the commercial growth of Makka formed the basis for further development in the process of economic interpretation. Thus writing shortly after Becker, H. Lammens added new dimensions to the theme. Inflating somewhat Margoliouth's allegation that 'Abd Al-Muṭṭalib used to sell the Zamzam water to the pilgrims Lammens stated that the privilege of *siqâyah* was utilized to make money by levying some charge for the use of the well of Zamzam by pilgrims.[1] More sepcifically, however, Lammens emphasized the commercial importance of Makka in western Arabia as a whole and stated that it enjoyed a position of supremacy over the neighbouring nomadic tribes because of the commercial and political acumen of the Quraysh as well as because of their military strength.[2] He also suggested that along with being a commercial centre Makka was also a financial centre where complex financial operations were carried out.[3] Also drawing attention to the fact that individual interests and selfishness were sometimes put above tribal considerations Lammens suggested that there was a decline in tribal solidarity and a corresponding growth of "individualisme" in the Makkan society on the

1. H. Lammens, *La Mecque à la Veille de l'Hégire*, Beirut, 1924, p. 55.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 177.
3. *Ibid*, p. 231.

eve of the rise of Islam.[1]

It needs to be pointed out at once that there is no valid authority for the suggestion that the pilgrims were required to pay a charge for their use of the well of Zamzam. In any case scholars have called in question the accurateness of many of the details suppiled by Lammens and his use of the sources. A recent writer has very aptly pointed out that Lammens "is a notoriously unreliable scholar whose name is rarely mentioned... without some expression of caution or disapproval." [2] Nevertheless Lammens's and his predecessors' suggestions have continued to influence the further attempts at socio-economic interpretations of the rise of Islam. Thus, reflecting the views of Wellhausen, Torrey and Margoliouth on the one hand, and those of Lammens on the other, R. Bell observed in the early thirties that (a) Makka "had risen in comparatively recent times to wealth and prosperity"; that (b) on the material side of life it had been "in touch with the lands of culture which lay just beyond the bounds of Arabia"; that (c) any influence which the spiritual life in those lands had exerted "had probably been negative, tending to undermine the old religion"; that (d) the new conditions of wealth "were playing havoc with the kindliness and equality of the old life" and that (e) Muḥammad (ﷺ), seeing his people "materially prosperous but spiritually backward" set himself "to transplant into their minds some of the 'knowledge' of things religious which those who dwelt in more enlightened lands possessed."[3] Emphasizing more particularly the two last mentioned points Bell wrote, while dealing specifically with the beginning of Muḥammad's (ﷺ) religious activity, that he, being impressed by man's dependence on divine bounty and "also no doubt by the decay of religion and the neglect by the Quraish, rendered proud and arrogant by the influx of the new wealth, of the kindly duties which in tribal life bound rich and poor together and mitigated its harshness", set "himself to revive the power of religion" for which purpose he turned to the "ideas of those who were already worshippers of one God."[4] Bell differed, however, from those who thought that Muḥammad (ﷺ) "ambitiously aimed at uniting Arabia by the

1. H. Lammens, *Le Berceau de l'Islam: l'Arabie Occidentale a la Veille de l'Hégrie*, Rome 1914, pp. 187 ff., cited in watt, *M. at M.*, p. 18.

2. Patricia Crone, *Meccan trade and the rise of Islam*, Oxford, 1987, p. 3.

3. R. Bell, "Who were the hanifs", *M.W.*, 1930, pp 121-122.

4. R. Bell, "The beginning of Muḥammad's religious activity" *T.G.U.O.S.*, VII, (pp. 16-24), p. 23.

worship of one god and obedience to himself" and stated that to assume that is "to confuse the result with the beginning"; for there could be no doubt, Bell emphasized, that from the first Muḥammad's (ﷺ) "object was a religious one, and religious it remained fundamentally to the end, inspite of the political manoeuvring in which he became involved, and the political success he ultimately gained."[1]

In thus emphasizing that the Prophet was not politically motivated from the first and that his object from first to last was fundamentally "religious" Bell comes nearer the truth; but in saying that Muḥammad (ﷺ) only or mainly attempted to solve the socio-economic and spiritual problems of his society, consequent upon the influx of new wealth, by reviving "the power of religion", Bell essentially echoes the views of his predecessors, particularly that of Margoliouth, which says that the Prophet sought to carry out his project of socio-economic reforms by means of a new religious system. Bell's other statements also are more or less a recapitulation of his predecessors' views. Thus the suggestions that Makka had recently risen to new wealth and prosperity, that the Quraysh had been in touch with the "lands of culture" which made them somewhat aware of the primitiveness of their society and culture, that the influence of such contact with those lands, particularly with Judaism and Christianity, had to some extent undermined paganism, that the Prophet only aimed at removing the anomaly between his people's material prosperity and spiritual backwardness and that in doing so he derived his ideas and inspiration from "those who were already worshippers of one God" (i.e. Jews and Christians), had each and all been made by Bell's prededcessors like Muir, Margoliouth, Torrey and others. Also the suggestion that the influx of new wealth had made the Quraysh selfish, proud and negligent of the "kindliness and equality of the old life" is clearly a paraphrasing of Lammens's view of the decline in tribal solidarity and growth of "individualisme".

Bell seems to base the last mentioned point on an analysis of the early passages of the Qur'ân. A number of these passages do of course denounce the Quraysh leaders' worldliness and emphasize the duty of kindness and consideration for the needy and the orphan. But there is no indication whatsoever in the Qur'ân that the trait disapproved of or the duty emphasized were new developments and concomitants of the supposedly new wealth.

1. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

Bell seems to think that since we hear so much about the pre-Islamic Arabs' hospitality, generosity and kindliness, it must be the "new" wealth which made the Quraysh proud, arrogant and oblivious of what he calls the "kindliness and equality of the old life." The conclusion is erroneous in two ways. It assumes that the Arab society of old was full only of virtues, free from all kinds of wrongs and injustices. But the pre-Islamic Arab society was not at all such a utopia. Instances are not wanting to show that the opposite traits of deception, greed, miserliness, pride, arrogance, perfidy and violation of others' rights and property were equally prevalent among them, particularly among that very section, the nomadic tribes, who were in no way likely to be affected by the supposedly new prosperity. Secondly, although there is no doubt that the international trade of the Makkan Quraysh had entered upon a new phase of expansion as a result of the Prophet's great-grandfather Hâshim's conclusion of a series of trade treaties with the Byzantine authorities, Yaman, Abyssinia, etc.,[1] that does not necessarily mean that there was a sudden influx of new and overwhelming wealth for the Makkan Quraysh setting at naught their traditional kindliness and equality. Nor are decline in generosity and growth in selfishness an invariable outcome of an increase of wealth and prosperity in any and every society. It is also to be noted that despite tribal solidarity, individual members of the tribe owned, bequeathed and succeeded to property, enjoyed a good deal of freedom in their personal affairs and not infrequently placed their individual interests above the interest of the tribe. In other words "selfishness" and "indivividualisme" of which Lammens speaks and Bell implies existed in the pre-Islamic Arab society in no small measure. At any rate, they cannot be said to be exclusively new developments coming with the new commercial expansion. The truth is that the Pre-Islamic Arab society, like perhaps every society in all times and climes, contained both good qualities and bad traits and the Qur'ân, like all previous divine revelations, approves of and encourages the former, and denounces and reforms the latter.

II. WATT'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE THEME

In the light of the above it will be easy to understand Watt's contribution to the stock of materialistic interpretations. The "fuller attention" which he

1. Patricia Crone, *op.cit.*, in fact goes to the other extreme of suggesting that the "conventional" view of Makka's trading activities "is based on classical accounts of the trade between south Arabia and the Mediterranean some six hundred years" prior to the rise of Islam!

claims to have paid to the material factors appears to consist in an elaboration of the above-noted views and theories of his predecessors on the one hand, and his adoption and incorporation of all the different views in his treatment of the subject, on the other. In elaborating his predecessors' views, however, Watt strains the facts and the texts to fit in with those views; and in incorporating them he seems to overlook the fact that some of the views run counter to some others.

To begin with, Watt acknowledgingly accepts Lammens's conclusion that Makka on the eve of the rise of Islam was not only a growing commercial centre but also an important financial centre where "financial operations of considerable complexity were carried out."[1] The commercial growth of Makka, it may be recalled, is emphasized also by Margoliouth, among others. Watt also accepts Lammens's view that the Quraysh enjoyed a primacy over the neighbouring tribes of west and west-central Arabia; but he rejects the latter's theory of the Quraysh's retaining "a mercenary army of black slaves" for maintaining and enforcing that primacy. Instead, Watt takes up Lammens's other point, that of political acumen or *ḥilm* for the Quraysh, and suggests that "the primacy of Quraysh did not rest on their military prowess as individuals" but "on the military strength they could bring to bear on any opponent". This military strength was that of a "confederacy" of the tribes which the Quraysh had "built up on the basis of their mercantile enterprises." For their caravans to Yaman, Syria and elsewhere, says Watt, the Quraysh required the services of a large number of nomads as guides, escorts and camelmen, and would therefore "pay a chief for safe-conduct through his territory, for water, and for other supplies." Thus did the Quraysh draw into their trading network the nomadic tribes who "quickly recognized on which side their bread was buttered." "This feeling of solidarity" with Makka was further strengthened by its chiefs' matrimonial alliances with the various tribes "and by the tribal chiefs' receiving an allocation of shares in the Meccan 'joint stock companies'."[2]

The expression "Joint-stock Company" for the Makkan traders, it may be recalled, is Margoliouth's.[3] He speaks, however, only of the "Meccan heads of houses". Watt extends it to include the neighbouring and nomadic tribes

1. Watt, *M. at M*, 3.
2. *Ibid.*, 10-11.
3. *Supra*, p. 96. Also Margoliouth, *op. cit.*, 30-31.

as well. He does not, however, cite any specific instance of "the tribal chiefs' receiving an allocation of shares in the Meccan 'joint stock companies'." In view of the facts that the Makkan chiefs like 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib concluded marriage alliances with some of the neighbouring tribes and that there were occasional military alliances between Quraysh and such tribes, the possibility cannot be ruled out that some of those tribes might occasionally have come forward to taking part in the trade caravans of Makka, though we should always remember that nomadism and commercialism are strange bedfellows. In any case, it is far-fetched to conclude that such occasional joint trade ventures or military alliances constituted a "confederacy" of the tribes. Whatever might have been the nature of such cooperation of the tribes it is simply antithetical to suppose that such an alliance or 'confederacy' could be an instrument for the Quraysh to bring their military strength to bear on those very neighbouring tribes.

Watt also links up the commercial activities of the Quraysh with their inter-clan rivalry for power and leadership at Makka and states: "Within the commercial community of Mecca there was a continuous struggle for power." And although he does not directly say that the Prophet's mission was a phase in that traditional struggle for power and leadership, he in effect suggests this by saying that "since from the first Muḥammad was something of a statesman, it is necessary to consider at least the chief points."[1] As these chief points or "political groupings within the Quraysh" Watt refers to Quṣayy's snatching the control of Makka from Banû Khuzâ'ah, the struggle between his successors — Banû 'Abd al-Dâr and Banû 'Abd Manâf — for the offices and functions connected with the Ka'ba and administration of Makka, their forming two rival groups called *Al-Aḥlâf* and *Al-Muṭayyabûn*, and to their ultimately coming to a compromise over the issue.[2] Watt further relates this development with the subsequent formation of *Ḥilf al-Fuḍûl*.[3]

Speaking about the "control of affairs in Mecca", however, Watt belittles the importance of the traditional offices of *al-liwâ', al-siqâyah, al-rifâdah*, etc., though, reflecting the views of Margoliouth and Lammens, particularly of the latter, he observes that the office of *al-siqâyah* offered opportunities for making money, that "there was some charge for the use of the well of

1. Watt, *M. at M.*, 4.
2. *Ibid.*, 4-5.
3. *Ibid.*, 6-8.

Zamzam by the pilgrims."[1] Next it is observed that the influence of the individual in the affairs of the city depended on his personal qualifications and the power of his clan which depended on its wealth. According to Watt, Banû 'Abd Shams and Banû Makhzûm were the leading clans of Makka at the time of the Prophet's mission and that 'Abû Sufyân of the former clan dominated Makkan policy at the time because of his personal qualities of diplomacy and commercial and financial shrewdness. Watt even compares the position of 'Abû Sufyân at Makka with that of Pericles at Athens.[2]

More notably Watt extends the inter-clan rivalry of the Quraysh for power and leadership at Makka into the field of their international trade and assumes a keen inter-tribal commercial rivalry in that sphere too. He observes that the "political groupings" within "the commercial community" were "in turn involved in relations with the Arab tribes with whom the Makkan caravans came into contact, and with the great powers to whose markets they carried their goods."[3] In fact his suggestion of a "confederacy" of the tribes, mentioned above, is presented as an illustration of this relationship. The same theme of inter-clan commercial rivalry being carried to the great powers he attempts to illustrate by alleging that at the time of Abrahah's invasion 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib attempted to obtain favourable business terms for himself from the Abyssinian invader.[4] The same assumption underlies his further assumption that Muḥammad (ﷺ) in his youth was ousted from the field of the most profitable business operations.[5] And it is the same assumption of inter-clan commercial rivalry which Watt attempts to elaborate in connection with his theory about the *Ḥarb al-Fijâr* and the *Ḥilf al-Fuḍû*l.[6]

That theory about the *Ḥarb al-Fijâr* and the *Ḥilf al-Fuḍûl* will be dealt with in a subsequent chapter.[7] The unreasonableness of his assumption about 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib's role during Abrahah's campaign will also be pointed out later.[8] Also the speciousness and self-contradictory nature of his assumption

1. *Ibid.*, 8-9.
2. *Ibid.*, 9.
3. *Ibid.*, 4.
4. *Infra*, pp. 138-139.
5. *Infra*, Ch. VIII, sec.II.
6. Watt, *M. at M.*, 6-8, 14-16.
7. See Chap. IX.
8. *Infra*, pp. 139-140.

that the Prophet in his youth was ousted from the most profitable business operations will be noted in its place.[1] Here some basic weaknesses of the assumption of inter-clan commercial rivalry may be noted. The instances of "political groupings", namely, Quṣayy's ousting of Banû Khuzâ'ah from Makka, the struggle for power and offices between Banû 'Abd al-Dâr and Banû 'Abd Manâf, the formation of *Al-Aḥlâf* and *Al-Muṭayyabûn*, etc., were not at all an outcome of commercial rivalry among them, but of the struggle for the offices connected with the adminstration of the Ka'ba and the town of Makka. Even that dispute was settled by a compropmise. In fact before Hâshim ibn 'Abd Manâf's conclusion of a series of trade treaties with Yaman, the Byzantine authorities, Abyssinia and a number of Arab tribes, which was posterior to the above mentioned struggle, the Quraysh had not really entered the field of international trade on any mentionable scale. Also the glimpses that we get of the Arab tribes' cooperation or participation in the Makkan trade ventures since Hâshim's time do not in any way give the impression that those were commercial alliances effected by one group of Quraysh clans against another group. Although within the city of Makka the various Quraysh clans vied with one another for power and influence, there did not exist any commercial war, so to say, between their two main groups, nor did they ever carry their supposed commercial rivalry to the foreign courts and markets, nor to the tribes. Such a conduct on the part of the Quraysh clans would have been suicidal for their commercial interests as a whole, particularly in their relations with the tribes and for the safety of the Makkan caravans through tribal territories. There is no instance of one group of Quraysh clans ever making an alliance with a foreign power or with the nomadic tribes against another group, neither for commercial nor for political purposes. The instance of 'Uthmân ibn al-Ḥuwayrith, who attempted to seize political power of Makka with Byzantine help, was a case of personal ambition and, as Watt himself recognizes, 'Uthmân was disowned and abandoned by his own clan, Banû Asad.[2]

As regards Watt's treatment of the "control of affairs" in Makka, it is clearly geared to relegating Banû Hâshim, the Prophet's clan, into the background. That is why the traditional offices and functions in connection with the Ka'ba and the city administration are belittled. At the same time the

1. *Infra*, pp. 189-190.
2. Watt, *M. at M.*, 15, 19.

function of *al-siqâyah,* which was held by Banû Hâshim, is said to offer only the opportunities of making money from the pilgrims. This insinuation, together with the allegation against 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib in connection with Abrahah's invasion are intended mainly to bring into disrepute Banû Hâshim. For the same purpose no mention whatsoever is made of the very signifcant fact that for more than half a century till at least five years after the Abyssinian invasion 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib was the virtual chief of Makka and dominated both its internal and external scene. Even after his death Banû Hâshim were very prominent in the city affairs, besides exercising the traditional functions in connection with the Ka'ba, as is illustrated by their successfully withstanding the opposition of all the clans combined till at least the seventh year of the Prophet's mission. None of these facts finds mention in Watt's description of the control of affairs in Makka.

It is indisputable that the Quraysh and Makka itself owed their importance and position mainly to the existence in it of the Ka'ba which all the Arabs venerated and to which they paid visits and made annual pilgrimage. Makka's internal trade as a whole and much of her external trade were bound up with that House of God. Surely, therefore, the administration of its affairs and the task of managing the annual occasion of pilgrimage, particularly maintaining the supply of water and food during that season, formed the most important part of the city's affairs. This important and all-absorbing function in the city's civic life belonged to Banû Hashim by common agreement of the Quraysh. The importance of that position would be all the more clear if it is remembered that in ancient and early medieval times those who held the helm of religious affairs were considered the highest and most important group in society. The administration and management of "religious affairs", which never were exclusively "religious" in the narrow sense of the term, was the most important aspect of the affairs of the bodypolitic. Watt simply ignores these facts in his treatment of the control of affairs in Makka.

Conversely, he focusses attention mainly on the importance of *mala'* or assembly of the city-elders, which was in fact *nadwah*, one of the traditional five-or six-fold divisions in the administration of Makka's affairs. In stressing the function of *mala'* Watt further states that the importance and influence of a clan in the city's affairs depended on its wealth and the intelligence of its individual members. Wealth and intelligence of course counted, as they do count in every society in all ages; but if Banû 'Abd Shams and their allies

played important roles in the assembly of elders, this was so not because they only possessed wealth and their individual members possessed the qualities of diplomacy and commercial and financial shrewdness, but mainly because, according to the compromise between the *Aḥlâf* and the *Muṭayyabûn*, the functions like *al-nadwah* and *al-liwâ'* were assigned to Banû 'Abd Shams. And it is worth stressing that no decision could be adopted and acted upon unless all the clans unanimously consented to it. Watt notes this rule of unanimity; but he would have done better if he had also noted in this connection that when 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib went out openly to negotiate with Abrahah, he must have done so with the unanimous consent of all the clans; for he simply could not have taken such a momentous step concerning the city's life on his own account. Finally, Watt inflates the position of 'Abû Sufyân obviously at the cost of the other Makkan leaders. Far from being the Pericles of Makka, 'Abû Sufyân does not emerge on the scene prominently till the Prophet's migration to Madina. Before that event the scene of opposition had been dominated by leaders like 'Abû Jahl, 'Utbah ibn Rabî'ah, Al-Walîd ibn Mughîrah and even 'Abû Lahab of Banû Hâshim, not at all by 'Abû Sufyân. In all these respects Watt's treatment of the control of affairs in Makka is clearly partial and tendentious.

But to return to Watt's economic interpretation. Within the framework of a supposed inter-clan commercial rivalry within the Quraysh, Watt adopts and elaborates the other ideas of his predecessors, particularly the suggestions (a) that the commercial growth and influx of the new wealth played havoc with the old kindliness and generosity, giving rise to selfishness and individualism, (b) that this growing individualism together with contact with the outer world and with Judaism and Christianity led to a decline in the pagan religion and also in tribal solidarity; (c) that the anomaly thus occurring between the new material growth and the primitive spiritual and moral order needed to be readjusted; (d) that in seeking to effect that readjustment Muḥammad conceived a religious solution for essentially socio-economic problems and (e) that in doing so he derived his ideas from Judaism and Christianity.

These views of his predecessors Watt works out in his discussion on the social, moral, intellectual and religious background[1] of the rise of Islam and also in his treatment of what he calls the relevance of the early message of

1. Watt, *M. at M.*, 16-24.

the Qur'ân to the contemporary situation.[1] In discussing the social background Watt attempts to show that there was a decline in tribal solidarity and a corresponding growth of individualism. He states that though the concept of tribal solidarity "applied in general to the city of Mecca", it was "never absolute. The members of the tribe were not automatons, but human beings prone to selfishness — or what Lammens calls 'individualisme'; it would only be natural if sometimes they put private interests above those of the tribe."[2] Further, though "tribal solidarity continued to govern the actions of the best people, yet a certain individualism" had made its appearance in their thinking. This tendency to individualism was fostered by the circumstances of commercial life in Makka. That is why, points out Watt, 'Abû Lahab differed form his clan and opposed the Prophet, the "opposition to 'Uthmân ibn al-Ḥuwayrith came from within his own clan" and many became the Prophet's followers "despite the disapproval of their clans, even of their parents."[3] At the same time there appeared "an interesting new phenomenon in Mecca — the appearance of a sense of unity based on common material interests" so that business partnerships sometimes "cut across clan relationships." It was this sense of common material interests "that led the Aḥlâf and the Muṭayyabûn to compose their quarrel. It was this again that led to the forgetting of rivalries and the formation of a 'coalition government' after the defeat at Badr." The significance of all this was that the bond of kinship by blood was weakened and an opportunity was revealed "for establishing a wider unity on a new basis."[4] "If we are to look for an economic change correlated with the origin of Islam", concludes Watt,[5]

"then it is here that we must look... In the rise of Mecca to wealth and power we have a movement from a nomadic economy to a mercantile and capitalist economy. By the time of Muḥammad, however, there had been no readjustment of the social, moral, intellectual and religious attitudes of the community. These were still the attitudes appropriate to a nomadic community, for the most part. The tension felt by Muḥammad and some of his contemporaries was doubtless due ultimately to this contrast between men's conscious attitudes and the economic basis of their life."

And more or less the same ideas are advanced in his discussion on the

1. *Ibid.*, 72-96.
2. *Ibid.*, 18.
3. *Ibid.*, 10.
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*, 19-20.

pre-Islamic "moral ideal"[1] and the "religious and intellectual background".[2] Under these sub-headings Watt states, in sum, that (a) "it is generally agreed that the archaic pagan religion" was on the decline;[3] that (b) the moral ideal of *murû'ah* which found expression through generosity, hospitality, fidelity, etc., and which was the same as "tribal humanism" also was on the decline because of the growth of individualism (i.e. selfishness and niggardliness)[4] and that (c) the "premonitions of monotheism among the Arabs must have been due mainly to Christian and Jewish influences."[5]

Needless to point out how closely does Watt reflect in the above mentioned statements the views of his predecessors, particularly those of Margoliouth and Bell. The question of Christian and Jewish influences and of the decay of the pagan religion are dealt with separately.[6] Here the untenability of the main assumption, namely, that the commercial progress of Makka led to the growth there of individualism which in turn corroded clan solidarity and faded the old ideal of *murû'ah* may be pointed out.

In the first place, if a sense of unity based on common material interests led the *'Aḥlâf* and the *Muṭayyabûn* to compose their differences, as Watt rightly notes, and if the same sense led the Quraysh clans to form what is called a 'coalition government' after the defeat at Badr, then that sense was in no way a "new phenomenon", however "interesting" it might appear to Watt. For an era of about a century spans the two events, on the simple calculation that the battle of Badr took place when the Prophet was about fifty-five years old, that he was born when his father 'Abd Allah was some twenty-five years old, and the latter was born when his father 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib ibn Hâshim was about the same age and that the compromise between the *Aḥlâf* and the *Muṭayyabûn* was made when Hâshim was a young man. Also it should not be overlooked that the commercial expansion of the Quraysh took place after that event and mainly as a result of Hâshim's wise policy and leadership. The sense of unity based on common material interests, or rather the common sense, to which Watt refers, was thus neither a new deve-

1. *Ibid.*, 20-23.
2. *Ibid.*, 23-29.
3. *Ibid.*, 23.
4. *Ibid.*, 20, 24-25.
5. *Ibid.*, 27.
6. *Infra*, ch. XI.

lopment at the Prophet's time nor did it arise out of the commercial growth. Such common sense or pragmatism may be said to be characteristic of people living in hard and desert conditions in general, like the Arabs, and of the Quraysh in particular.

Secondly, if the sense of unity based on common material interests prevailed over the Quraysh during Hâshim's time as well as after the defeat at Badr, then it is simply unreasonable to assume that the same Quraysh clans carried their mutual and petty rivalries inside Makka into the sphere of their international trade — to the foreign courts and to the nomadic tribes. The same sense of common material interests must have dictated to them the advisability of not doing so. And, as already pointed out, there is no instance of a Quraysh clan ever concluding a trade or military pact with any foreign power or nomadic tribe against any of their own clans.

Thirdly, in saying that business partnerships sometimes "cut across clan relationships" and also in citing this fact as an instance of the growth of individualism Watt seems to labour under a fundamental mistake. He seems to think and suggest that previously to this development business activities of the Quraysh followed clan relationships. This was never so. Business activities do not appear at any time to have been carried on by the tribe or clan as such, but by its individual members as individuals and not in the name of or on behalf of his clan. This was so in both the spheres of internal and external trades. A trade caravan going to a foreign land consisted of a number of individual traders, almost always from different clans, together with their servants and equipage. It was a company only in the sense of the 'companionship' of the traders, rather than in the sense of an amalgamation of their individual capitals into a 'joint stock". It was also a joint venture in the sense of their travelling together for safety and other advantages. Each individual trader, however, did business with his own capital and with that of his absentee partners who paid their capital to him for the purpose. And just as individuals from different clans could conclude marriage alliances, similarly they could and did enter into business partnerships without infringing clan solidarity. This was no new phenomenon and there was no question of "cutting" across clan relationships in such deals.

Fourthly, Watt, following Lammens, considers selfishness or one's giving priority to one's own interest as coterminous with individualism. And as illustrations of this individualism Watt cites 'Abû Lahab's going against his

clan and opposing the Prophet, 'Uthmân ibn al-Ḥuwayrith's taking a stand different from that of his clan and the early Muslims' embracing Islam despite the disapproval of their clans and families. These illustrations are faulty in at least one respect. Such divergent and conflicting conducts as that of 'Abû Lahab on the one hand in opposing Islam and that of the early Muslims in embracing it on the other could not have been due to the same phenomenon or the same type of individualism. 'Abû Lahab and 'Uthmân ibn al-Ḥuwayrith no doubt acted in pursuance of selfishness or self-interest; but the early Muslims, whatever might have been their considerations, did not act in pursuance or in furtherance of their selfishness or material interests. Even if their action is regarded as symptomatic of individualism, surely the Lammens-Watt definition cannot be applied to it. Its source and inspiration must have been different from and unconnected with commercialism and the influx of the new wealth. In other words, their individualism was the same as it existed among the Arabs since time immemorial.

Thus the premise that the commercial progress led to the rise of individualism weakening clan solidarity and the ideal of *murû'ah* thus providing the opportunity for reorganizing the society on a new basis is wrong. The extent of individualism discernible at the time was inherent in the Arab tribal society since antiquity. So did selfishness, niggardliness, cruelty and carelessness to the needy and the indigent exist side by side with generosity, hospitality and fidelity. There was no decline as such in clan solidarity, nor any perceptible and immediate need for providing an alternative to the system of social solidarity. Also the statement that in the rise of Makka "we have a movement from a nomadic economy to a mercantile and capitalist economy" is specious and a simplification of a rather complex situation. Trading activities and commercialism side by side with nomadism are known to exist in Arabia since time immemorial.[1] At any rate, the commercial agreements concluded some one hundred years before the Prophet's time by his great-great-grandfather Hâshim with a number of the neighbouring countries and nomadic tribes presuppose a good deal of commercial tradition and experience indicative in no way of a new movement from nomadism to commercialism. In fact Watt, besides attempting to justify the Margoliouth-Bell thesis that the new situation at Makka called for a re-adjustment of the

1. Once again we may recall here Patricia Crone's thesis that the classical accounts of Arabia's commercial activities relate to a period som six hundred years prior to the rise of Islam.

old socio-religious and moral attitudes, also appears to incorporate some elements of Grimme's socialistic interpretation. Thus, in trying to show the relevance of the early Qur'ânic messages to the contemporary situation,[1] or rather in justifying his socio-economic interpretation, Watt not only reiterates and elaborates the themes of individualism and the decay of social solidarity etc., but also further states that though it is unlikely that there had been any increase in absolute poverty in Makka due to the commercial growth, the "gap between the rich and the poor" or "between the rich, not so rich and poor" had increased[2] and that Islam "drew its support not from the bottom layers of the social scale, but from the middle... It was not so much a struggle between 'haves' and 'have-nots' as between 'haves' and 'nearly hads'."[3] This is unmistakably reminiscent of Grimme's socialistic interpretation with a slight modification. All these, however, relate to the early phase of the Prophet's mission and the contents of the early Qur'ânic passages. These and other sayings of Watt in this connection are therefore discussed at a later stage in this work.[4]

1. Watt, *M. at M.*, 72-96.
2. *Ibid.*, 72.
3. *Ibid.*, 96.
4. See Ch. XXIV.

SECTION II
BIRTH, BOYHOOD AND YOUTH

CHAPTER V

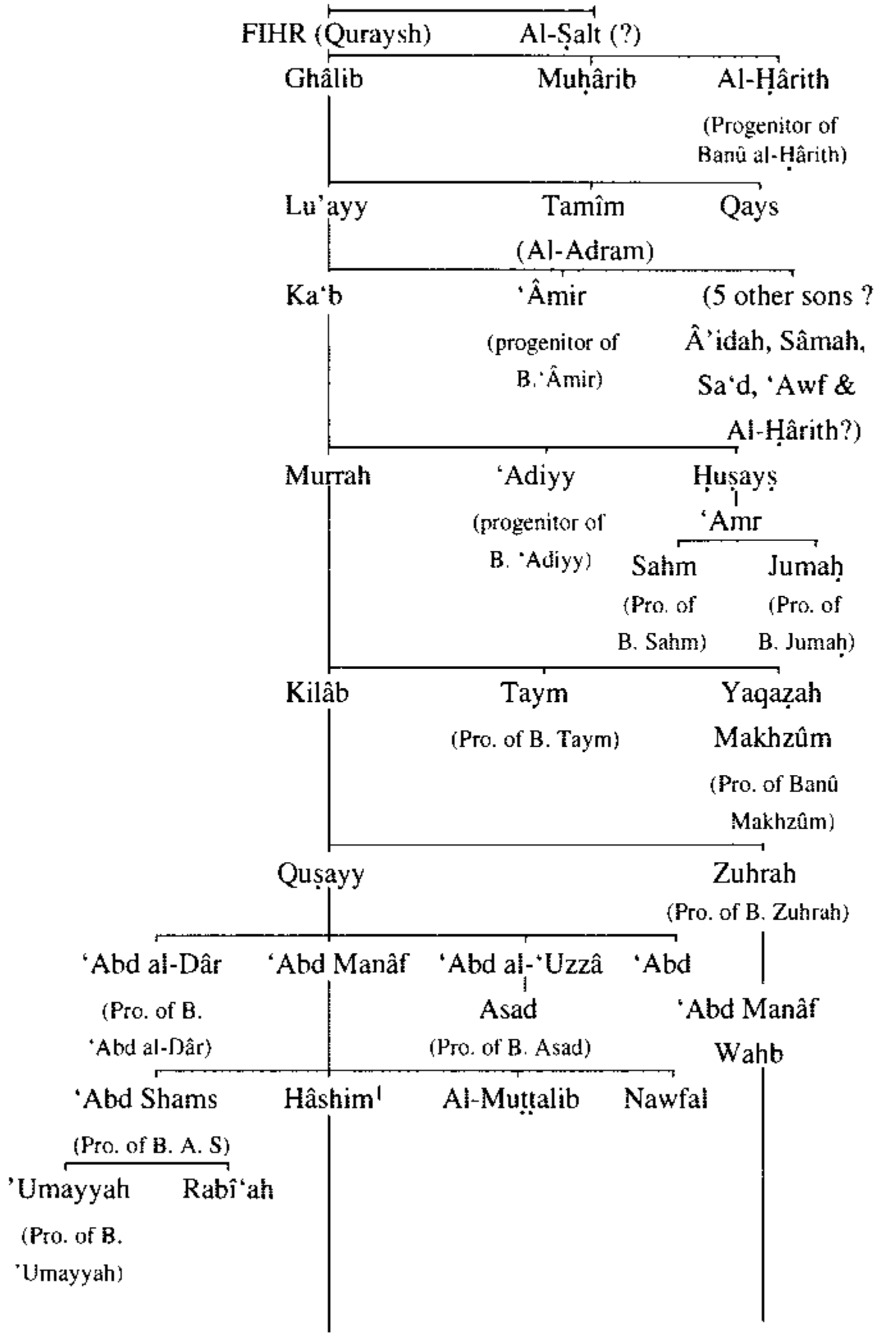
FAMILY BACKGROUND, BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD

I. FAMILY BACKGROUND

Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) was born of the noblest family of the noblest clan, Banû Hâshim, of the noble Quraysh tribe of Makka.[1] There was no Quraysh clan at Makka with whom he was not closely related by blood or marriage.[2] His father 'Abd Allah was a son of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, son of Hâshim, son of 'Abd Manâf, son of Quṣayy, son of Kilâb, son of Murrah, son of Ka'b,etc., going back to Prophets Ismâ'îl and Ibrâhîm (p.b. on them). His mother 'Âminah was the daughter of Wahayb, son of 'Abd Manâf, son of Zuhrah son of Kilâb, son of Murrah, etc., leader of the Zuhrah clan. Thus the ancestries of both the parents met in the person of Kilâb ibn Murrah. The ancestral tree stands as follows:[3]

IBRÂHÎM
ISMÂ'ÎL
'Adnân
Ma'add   'Akk (Al-Ḥârith)
Nizâr   'Iyâḍ   Qanas   'Ubayd   Al-Ḍaḥḥâk
Muḍar   Rabî'ah   'Iyâḍ   'Anmâr (?)
Ilyâs   Qays 'Aylân
Mudrikah ('Âmir)   'Amr (Ṭabîkhah)   'Umayr (Qama'ah)
Khuzaymah   Hudhayl   Ghâlib (?)
Kinânah   Asad   Al-Hûn
Al-Naḍr   Malk[4]   Milkân   'Abd Manât
Mâlik   Yakhlid (?)

1. *Bukhârî*, nos. 3491, 3492; *Musnad*, I., 210; IV, 107, 166; Ibn Sa'd, I., 20-23.
2. *Bukhârî*, nos. 3497, 4818; *Musnad*, I., 229; Ibn Sa'd, I., 24.
3. Ibn Hishâm, I., 92-97, 103-104; Al-Ṭabarî (*Târîkh*), II, 239-276 (I / 1073-1122); Ibn Ḥazm al-Andalusî, *Jamharat Ansâb al-'Arab*, Beirut, 1403 / 1983, 9-15. The Names in the chart upto 'Abd Manâf are, from left to right, written in the order mentioned by Ibn Ḥazm. They are not necessarily in the order of their dates of birth.
4. Ibn Ḥazm specifically notes that the name is Malk, not Mâlik.



1. Hâshim had some other children by other wives.

'Abd al-Muṭṭalib

Al-Ḥârith | 7 other sons | Abû Lahab | 'Abd Allah | Al-'Abbâs etc.[1] | 'Âminah

MUḤAMMAD

Fihr, the tenth in the line of descent from 'Adnân, was known as Quraysh. It was after him that all his descendants came to be known as Quraysh or the Quraysh tribe. The sixth in the line of descent from Fihr, Quṣayy, was the great-grandfather of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, the Prophet's grandfather. It was Quṣayy, as mentioned earlier, who had settled the Quraysh at Makka, established their complete control over it and had combined in his hands the five traditional functions of the Makkan bodypolitic. It has also been noted how these functions were subsequently shared by Quṣayy's descendants, Banû 'Abd Manâf and Banû 'Abd al-Dâr and how Hâshim, the Prophet's great-grandfather, besides exercising the functions of *al-Siqâyah* and *al-Rifâdah*, developed the international trade of the Quraysh as a whole by concluding a series of trade treaties with the Bayzantine authorities and Persia in the north and with the rulers of Yaman and Abyssinia in the south. He had also concluded trade pacts with the Arab tribes lying on the Quraysh's trade routes.[2]

In connection with one of his trade journeys Hâshim visited the market of Yathrib (Madina) where he was captivated by the natural charms and commanding personality of a lady whom he saw supervising her employees in buying and selling her merchandize. She was Salamah bint 'Amr of Banû 'Adiyy ibn al-Najjâr. She had previously been married to 'Uḥayḥah ibn al-

1. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib had 15 sons and 5 daughters by 6 wives. They are: By Safiyyah of Banû 'Âmir b. Ṣa'ṣ'ah—Al-Ḥârith. By Fâṭimah bint 'Amr of Banû Makhzûm—Al-Zubayr, Abû Ṭâlib, 'Abd al-Ka'bah and 'Abd Allah; and five daughters, Bayḍâ', 'Umaymah, 'Arwa, 'Âtikah and Barrah. By Lubna of Banû Khuzâ'ah—'Abû Lahab ('Abd al-'Uzzâ). By Hâlah of Banû Zuhrah (sister of 'Âminah)—Al-Muqawwim, Hajal or Khajal, Al-Mughîrah and Ḥamzah. By Nutaylah of Banû Rabî'ah ibn Nizâr—Darar, Qatham and Al-'Abbâs. By Mun'amitah of Banû Khuzâ'ah—Ghaydaq and Mus'ab.

Of the daughters Al-Bayḍâ' was married to Kurayz ibn Rabî'ah of Banû 'Abd Shams; 'Umaymah to Hajir ibn Ri'âb al-Asadî; 'Âtikah to 'Umayyah ibn al-Mughîrah of Banû Makhzûm; Safiyyah was first married to Ḥarb ibn 'Umayyah, of Banû 'Umayyah ('Abû Sufyân's father) and on Ḥarb's death to 'Awwâm ibn Khuwaylid of Banû Asad (Khadîjah's brother). Barrah was married to 'Abd al-Asad ibn Hilâl of Banû Makhzûm.

2. See *supra*, pp. 38-39.

Julah but was now divorced. Hâshim proposed to marry her. Because of her nobility and importance among her own people she stipulated that she should have freedom to manage her own affairs. Hâshim agreed, married her and allowed her to stay at Madina to look after her business and other affairs. There she in the course of time gave birth to a son for Hâshim. The child was named Shaybah. Naturally, Hâshim left the child to grow up there under the care of his mother, intending to bring him to Makka when he would be stepping into boyhood. That time nearly approached when Hâshim, all of a sudden, died at Ghaza (then in Syria, now in Palestine) where he had gone on a trade travel. It may be recalled that it was Hâshim who had also introduced the two principal yearly trade journeys for the Quraysh, once in the summer towards Syria and the Byzantine lands, and again in the winter towards Yaman and Abyssinia.[1]

The functions of *al-Siqâya* and *al-Rifâdah* now devolved on Hâshim's younger brother Al-Muṭṭalib. He brought his deceased brother's son Shaybah from Madina to Makka at the appropriate time. When he came with the boy the people jokingly remarked that the boy was Al-Muṭṭalib's slave,—'Abd al-Muṭṭalib. "Hell on you", shouted out al-Muṭṭalib to the crowd saying, "He is my brother's son."[2] From that time, however, the boy's original name receded into the background and he was popularly called 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib.

Like his brother Hâshim, Al-Muṭṭalib also exercised the functions of *al-Siqâyah* and *al-Rifâdah* with credit and generosity. Indeed he proved to be so generous in the discharge of those functions that the Quraysh used to call him *al-Fayḍ* or the Generous[3]. After exercising those functions for a considerable time he died at Radman in Yaman where he had gone on a trade mission. His death was quickly followed by the death of his remaining brother Nawfal.[4]

'Abd al-Muṭṭalib was by now a grown-up young man. He was extremely handsome, to which he added a commanding presence, a penetrating intelligence and other qualities of a born leader. He now succeeded to the offices of *al-Siqâyah* and *al-Rifâdah*. Under his management these two functions became the two most important public activities of Makkan life. His most

1. *Supra*, p. 39.
2. Ibn Hishâm, I., 138.
3. *Ibid.*, 137.
4. *Ibid.*, 139.

important achievement, as already mentioned,[1] was the re-excavation of the Zamzam well which brought both prosperity and influence for the Quraysh as a whole.

But he had one want. He had at the time of re-excavating the Zamzam well only one son; and he earnestly prayed to Allah to bless him with at least ten sons. Tradition says that 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib was so fervent in his yearning for a large number of sons that he vowed to Allah to sacrifice one for Him if he was blessed with at least ten. Partly in pursuance of this yearning he married successively four wives, one from Banû 'Âmir, two from Banû Khuzâ'ah and the fourth, Fâṭimah bint 'Amr ibn 'Â'id, from Banû Makhzûm. Allah granted his prayer. He had in the course of time ten sons (and more). The tenth and till then the youngest was 'Abd Allah, by his Makhzûmite wife Fâṭimah. 'Abd Allah was an exceptionally handsome boy of perfect health and constitution. As he grew up 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib proceeded to fulfil his vow. He took all his sons to the Ka'ba and drew the lots in the usual manner for selecting the son to be sacrificed. The lot fell on 'Abd Allah, the youngest and dearest to his father.[2]

'Abd al-Muṭṭalib forthwith proceeded to fufil his vow lest he should be overtaken by love and affection. But opposition came from the Quraysh leaders, the fiercest being from the leader of Banû Makhzûm, Al-Mughîrah ibn 'Abd Allah ibn 'Amr ibn Makhzûm, because 'Abd Allah was the son of their daughter, Fâṭimah bint 'Amr ibn 'Â'id.[3] Ultimately 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib was obliged to seek the advice of a famous lady-soothsayer of Yathrib (Madina) to find a solution for the difficulty arising out of his pact with Allah on the one hand and the determind opposition of the Quraysh leaders on the other. The lady suggested to him that he draw lots by placing 10 camels on one side and 'Abd Allah on the other, asking 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib to continue doing so, eash time adding 10 camels to the number, till the lot fell on them. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib returned home, went to the Ka'ba and drew lots as advised.

1. *Supra*, pp. 40-41.

2. Ibn Hishâm, I., 153.

3. A parallel to the Mukhzûmite role in the matter happened subsequently when they wanted to persecute 'Abû Salamah of their clan on his conversion to Islam but 'Abû Ṭâlib gave him protection on the ground that he was 'Abû Ṭâlib's sister's son. Still subsequently the Prophet ruled that a son belongs to his mother's family too (*Bukhârî*, no. 6762: إبن أخت القوم منهم). See also *Musnad*, II, 119, 171-172, 180, 201, 222, 231, 246, 275, 276-277; IV, 396, 430: *Tirmidhi*, no. 3901; *Al-Nasâ'î*, nos. 2610, 2611; *Al-Dârimî*, II, pp. 243-244.

When the number of camels reached 100, the lot fell on them. But 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib was strictly scrupulous and conscientious. He wanted to be quite sure about Allah's intention in the matter. Hence he drew the lots two more times; and again each time these fell on the camels. Thus was 'Abd Allah's life redeemed by sacrificing 100 camels instead.[1] It is for this well-known incident that the Prophet subsequently used to say that he was the son of two sacrifices, Prophet Ismâ'îl and 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib.

Undoutedly it was wise on Al-Mughîrah's part to have come forward to save the life of their daughter's son 'Abd Allah. Tragically, however, it was equally a folly on the part of Al-Mughirah's son, Al-Walîd, to lead a little subsequently the opposition to 'Abd Allah's son.[2] But though Al-Walîd thus reversed his father's policy, there could be no reversal of the fact that the bloods of both Banû Hâshim and Banû Makhzûm flowed equally well in 'Abd Allah's veins. And to these two streams was soon joined a third stream of blood, that of Banû Zuhrah. For 'Abd Allah soon bloomed into full youth. He was now in his early twenties, and 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib was in search of a suitable bride for his son. His eyes fell on 'Âminah, daughter of Wahb ibn 'Abd Manâf, leader of Banû Zuhrah. The marriage between 'Abd Allah and 'Âminah took place in due course. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib himself had a little earlier married her cousin Hâlah, daughter of Wahb's brother Wahayb ibn 'Abd Manâf.

Scarcely had these happy occasions ended when the Makkan and Arab society in general were stirred to their depth by Abrahah's invasion of Makka and the Ka'ba.[3] The disastrous end of Abrahah's campaign against the Ka'ba is significant in at least three important respects. Far from diminishing the importance of the Ka'ba, its importance and prestige now soared high with the Arabs, and along with it the prestige of the Quraysh also increased in the eyes of the Arabs in general. Secondly, the event illustrated and confirmed 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib's leadership of the Makkan society and his position as the most important functionary in connection with The House. Thirdly, it provides the sheet-anchor in the life-story of the Prophet, and therefore in the history of Islam; for he was born in "The Year of the Elephant".

1. Ibn Hishâm, I, 154-155.
2. *Infra*, Ch. XXV.
3. *Supra*, pp. 41-42.

II. BIRTH AND INFANCY

'Abd Allah, the Prophet's father, had been married to 'Âminah less than a year before the occurrence of the Elephant. The couple was not destined, however, to enjoy conjugal life for long. After living with his wife for some time 'Abd Allah went on a trade journey to Syria and fell ill on his return trip. The caravan left him with his father's maternal relatives of Banu 'Adiyy ibn al-Najjâr of Yathrib (Madina) where 'Abd Allah died of that illness shortly afterwards. He was hardly 25 years old when he died.[1] At that time 'Âminah had conceived Muḥammad (ﷺ) barely for a few months. 'Abd Allah was buried at Madina. Thus the Prophet became an orphan before his birth.

The sources generally agree in saying that the Prophet was born in Rabî' I, on a Monday in The Year Of the Elephant.[2] It is now an established fact that the Prophet's *hijrah* to Madina took place in 622 A.C. when he was in the 53rd year of his life. Calculating backward from this latter year and assuming that 53 lunar years equal 51 solar years, his birth would fall in 571 A.C. There is a difference of opinion, however, about the exact day of Rabî' I. For instance, Ibn Isḥâq puts it on the 12th; Ibn Sa'd, on the authority of Al-Wâqidî, states it to be the 10th, while Mas'ûdî puts it on the 8th.[3] Further calculations have been made on the basis of this period between the 8th and the 12th of Rabî' I and the fact of Monday being the day on which the Prophet was born. According to minute astronomical calculations carried out by Maḥmûd Pâshâ al-Falakî of Egypt, the only Monday between 8 and 12 Rabî' I of 571 A.C. falls on the 9th.[4] Accepting this calculation a number of scholars state that the Prophet was born on Monday, 9 Rabî' I, corresponding to 20 April 571 A.C. There are others, however, who assume that 53 lunar years would equal 52 years. Hence they place the birth-date in March / April 570 A.C.[5] But the former view appears more reasonable.

1. Ibn Sa'd, I., 99.

2. Ibn Hishâm, I., 158; Ibn Sa'd, I., 100-101; *Tirmidhî*, no. 3619; *Musnad*, IV., 215; 'Abû al-Fidâ', II., 5.

3. Ibn Hishâm, I., 158; Ibn Sa'd, I., 100; Al-Mas'ûdî, *Târikh*, Cairo, 1346 H., 398.

4. Maḥmûd Pâshâ al-Falakî, *Natâ'ij al-Afhâm Fî Taqwîm al-'Arab Qabla al-Islâm*, etc., Dâr al-Bashâ'ir al-Islâmiyah, Beirut, First print, 1407 / 1986, (tr. from the French into Arabic by Aḥmad Zakî Afindî), specially pp. 32-35.

5. Holding the former view are Shiblî Nu'mânî, *Sîrat Al-Nabî* (Urdu text), Vol. I., Azam- =

It is related that before the birth of her child 'Âminah had been instructed in a dream or by an angel to name the child, when born, as Muḥammad (or Aḥmad)[1] and that 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, the grandfather, also had a similar dream.[2] Such dreams are not at all unlikely— many even toady experience dreams that prove remarkably true. Also similar dreams are mentioned in the Bible in connection with the birth of Jesus and other prophets. Be that as it may, there is no doubt that the Prophet-to-be was named Muḥammad almost immediately after his birth and that he was alternatively called 'Aḥmad' since his very early days.[3] There are also reports of some miraculous and supernatural occurrences accompanying the birth of the Prophet.[4]

It was the custom of the noble and respectable families of Makka at that time to entrust their new-born babes to the care of suitable nurses for suckling and bringing them up. For a few days after his birth Muḥammad (ﷺ) was suckled by Thuwaybah, a female slave of 'Abû Lahab's, an uncle of the Prophet. It is reported that 'Abû Lahab was so happy at the birth of a son to his deceased brother 'Abd Allah that he set free this female slave of his. She had also suckled Ḥamzah, another of the Prophet's uncles who was almost his same age. After some days, however, the Prophet was made over to the care of Ḥalîmah bint Abû Dhu'ayb of Banû Sa'd belonging to the Hawâzin branch of Quraysh. They lived in the open and healthy desert area of Ḥudaybiyah and were also noted for the purity of their Arab culture and the high standard of their language. Ḥalîmah's husband was Al-Ḥârith ibn 'Abd al-'Uzzâ ibn Rifâ'ah (also perhaps called 'Abû Kabshah). The couple themselves had a baby son named

= garh (India), 1962, pp. 171-172; 'Abul Ḥasan 'Alî al-Nadwî, *Muḥammad Rasûlullah* (Eng. tr. by M. Ahmad), Lucknow, 1979, p. 91, n. 4; Muḥammad al-Kurdî, *Nûr al-Yaqîn Fî Sîrat Sayyid al-Mursalîn*, Cairo, 1328 H., p. 9; Muḥammad Akram Khân, *Mustafâ Charit* (Bengali text), 4th edn., Dhaka, 1975, pp. 224-225. The other view is held, for instance, by Muḥammad al-Ghazâlî, *Fiqh al-Sîrah*, 7th impression, 1976, p. 60; Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal, *The Life of Muḥammad* (Eng. tr. Ismâ'îl Râji al-Fârûqî), Qum, Iran, n.d., pp. 47-48.

1. Ibn Hishâm, I., 157-158; Ibn Sa'd, I., 104; Ibn Ḥibbân, *Al-Sîrat al-Nabawiyyah wa Akhbâr al-Khulafâ'*, first impression, Beirut, 1407 / 1987, p. 53.

2. Suhaylî, *Al-Rawḍ al-'Unuf*, I., p. 105.

3. *Bukhârî*, no. 4896; *Muslim*, Nos. 124, 125; *Musnad*, IV, 80, 81, 404; V, 404; *Tirmidhî*, no. 2840; *Dârimî*, II, 317-318; Ibn Sa'd, I., 104-105.

4. *Musnad*, IV, 127, 128; V, 262; *Ṭayâlisî*, no. 1140; Ibn Sa'd, I., 102.

'Abd Allah and two daughters named respectively 'Unaysah and Ḥudhâfah. The latter was more commonly known as Shaymâ' and she, along with her mother, mainly looked after the boy Muḥammad (ﷺ).[1] In his later years the Prophet used to show affectionate respects to Shaymâ' and others of his foster relatives.[2]

Muḥammad (ﷺ) remaind in Ḥalîmah's care and nursing for two years in the first instance. During this period she used to bring the child every six months to 'Âminah for visit as well as for her satisfaction as to the child's growth and well-being. At the end of the first two years Ḥalîmah brought the child to 'Âminah for the purpose of finally making him over to her. But 'Âminah, in view of the unhealthy climate then prevailing at Makka and also in view of the satisfactory growth and health of the child asked Ḥalîmah to keep him with her for a further period. Ḥalîmah was only too glad to receive him back for she had already developed a strong motherly affection and fondness for the uncommonly healthy, handsome and sweet-mannered boy. Thus he remained with his foster parents for another term of two years or so.

Towards the end of this second term of his stay with his foster parents there occurred a miraculous and supernatural incident to him. It is known as *shaqq al-ṣadr* or "opening of the chest".[3] The reportes differ, however, in matters of detail as well as in respect of dates and places of the occurrence.[4] Shortly after the incident Ḥalîmah returned him finally to his mother.

IV. BOYHOOD AND THE JOURNEY TO SYRIA

The Prophet was not destined to enjoy the company and affection of his mother for long after his return from Ḥalîmah's care. Barely a year and a half elapsed after she had taken charge of her son, 'Âminah took him to Madina, accompanied by the family maid 'Umm 'Ayman, to visit her husband's maternal relatives. In the course of her return journey from Madina, how-

1. Ibn Hishâm, I, 160-161; Ibn Sa'd, I, 108, 110-112; *Dârimî*, Intr. p. 8; *Musnad*, IV, 184.
2. Ibn Sa'd, I, 114-115.
3. Ibn Hishâm, I, 164-165; Ibn Sa'd, I, 112; *Musnad*, III, 121, 149, 238; IV, 184; *Muslim*, No. 261; *Nasâ'î*, Nos. 448, 452; *Dârimî*, Intr. p. 8.
4. See for discussion *Fatḥ al-Bârî*, V, 244-245.

ever, 'Âminah fell ill and died at Abwâ', a place between Madina and Makka. The Prophet was brought back to Makka by the maid servant 'Umm 'Ayman. Thus he became full orphan when he had just crossed the stage of infancy and stepped into boyhood. He was only six years old when he lost his mother too.

The charge of the boy now naturally devolved on the grandfather, 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, who was then about 80 years old. The old man bestowed upon the orphan all care and affection and always kept him in his company. It is related that 'Abd al-Muaṭṭalib used to spend most of his time sitting on a mantle spread for him in the shade of the Ka'ba. His sons used to sit round him, but not on it, out of respect for him; but the boy Muḥammad (ﷺ) used to sit upon it. When his uncles attempted to take him away 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib prevented them from doing so, saying that he noticed signs of future greatness in the boy and caressing him by gently patting him on the back. It pleased 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib to see what the boy did while sitting near him.[1]

'Abd al-Muṭṭalib was, however, already far advanced in age and died after two years, at the age of eighty-two. When he realized his end was approaching he specifically entrusted the boy Muḥammad (ﷺ) to the care of his uncle 'Abû Ṭâlib, who was a full brother of 'Abd Allah.[2] The Prophet was only eight years old when his grandfather left him for ever. 'Abû Ṭâlib treated him like his own son and, as will be seen later on, did not abandon him even at the most trying hour of his own and the Prophet's life. The Prophet grew up along with his cousins, specially Ja'far and 'Alî, sons of 'Abû Ṭâlib, who turned out to be his best friends since boyhood.

Very little is recorded about the activities of the Prophet at this tender age except that he sometimes tended sheep along with his cousins. It is noted, however, that unlike the other children of his age he did not engage himself in useless and idle plays and games. Also, there is no reference whatsoever to his having ever received education at the hands of any individual or at any institution, nor to his having learnt to read and write.

The only notable incident recorded by the chroniclers about his early life is his journey, along with his uncle 'Abû Ṭâlib, in a trade caravan to Syria. The Prophet was about 10 or 12 years old at that time. The account of the

1. Ibn Hishâm, I., 168.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 179.

journey, as given by Ibn Isḥâq, is as follows: Once 'Abû Ṭâlib planned to go with a trade caravan to Syria. When the preparations were complete and the caravan was ready to depart, the boy Muḥammad (ﷺ) so stuck himslef to his uncle that the latter took pity on him and took him on the journey. The caravan arrived at Bosra where there lived a Christian monk named Baḥîra in a monastery or cave for him. He was well-versed in Christianity and its scripture. Previously many times the Quraysh caravans had passed by the same route and by his abode, but he had never taken any notice of them. This time, however, he treated them specially. This was so because, "it is alleged" (فيما يزعمون), that he had noticed something special in the caravan. He noticed from his cell the caravan approaching and a piece of cloud giving shade to the Prophet alone among his people. As the caravan came near the cell and stopped under a tree, the cloud also stopped there while the branches of the tree drooped down to protect the Prophet from the sun. Thus recognizing in the boy the signs of the coming Prophet as foretold in the Christian scripture Baḥîra prepared a sumptuous meal for the party and invited them to the feast, mentioning specifically that none shoud be left behind. Yet, when the party went to Baḥîra's place they left the Prophet behind with the equipage thinking that he was too young to be present at the reception. When Baḥîra noticed that the Prophet was not among his guests, he enquired of them whether everyone had come, and on being told that only a boy had been left behind, he requested them to bring him too, which was done. When the Prophet came Baḥîra "got up and embraced him and made him sit with the people." Baḥîra also looked at him closely and noticed his physical features and other things described as signs of the coming Prophet in the Christian scripture. When the people had finished eating and gone away Baḥîra had a conversation with the Prophet, asked him a few questions about his affairs and was satisfied that the answers "coincided with what Baḥîra knew of his description." Then the monk looked at Muḥammad's (ﷺ) back and saw "the seal of prophethood" between his shoulders in the "very place described" in the scripture. Baḥîra then went to the boy's uncle 'Abû Ṭâlib and asked him what relation the boy was to him, and when he said that the boy was his son, Baḥîra remarked that that could not be the case, "for it could not be that the father of this boy was alive." Thereupon 'Abû Ṭâlib said that the boy was

his nephew and that his father had died before the child was born. "You have told the truth", said Baḥîra and added: "Take your nephew back to his country and guard him carefully against the Jews, for by Allah! if they see him and know about him what I know, they will do him evil; a great future lies before this nephew of yours, so take him home quickly. So his uncle took him off quickly and brought him back to Makka when he had finished his trading in Syria." "It is alleged", further writes Ibn Isḥâq, that three other "people of the Book" had noticed in the Prophet what Baḥîra had seen and that they tried to get at him but Baḥîra kept them away.[1]

The story is related in more or less the same form in other works too.[2] The report in *Tirmidhî* adds that as the caravan stopped near the monastery Baḥîra came out to them, recognized the Prophet in the party and exclaimed: "This is the leader of the world, the Messenger of God, who will be sent as a blessing for mankind!" The Quraysh party, being surprised, asked Baḥira about his reasons for making such a remark. He replied that he had noticed that since the party left Makka, every tree and every stone on the way prostrated in honour of the Prophet and that such would never be the case with trees and stones except with regard to a Prophet. It is further stated that Baḥîra noticed the shade of a tree moving as the Prophet moved from place to place and that a few "Romans" came in search of the Prophet because they had come to know from a study of their scripture that the promised Prophet was to appear at that time! The report ends by saying that Baḥîra earnestly requested 'Abû Ṭâlib not to take the boy to the country where the "inimical" Jews abounded and that 'Abû Ṭâlib sent him back to Makka "and 'Abû Bakr sent Bilâl with him".[3]

Muslim scholarly opinions are divided on the correctness of many of the details in the above story, though the essential facts of the Prophet's travel to Syria with his uncle and the meeting with Baḥîra are not doubted. Ibn Isḥâq inserts the qualifying phrase "as they think" (يزعمون or فيما يزعمون) at least five times in his account, once before every material statement. Tirmidhî, while holding that the report is "good" (حسن) adds that it is an "unusual one" (غريب) and that he does not know it from any other source.[4] The obvious error in the

1. Ibn Hishâm, I., 170-173.

2. See for instance Al-Ṭabarî, *Târîkh*, II, 278-279; Ibn Sa'd, I., 121; *Tirmidhî*, no. 3620 (Vol. V., Egyptian edn., 1975, 590-591).

3. *Tirmidhî*, no. 3620 (Vo. V., pp. 590-591).

4. *Ibid.* His words are: (هذا حديث حسن غريب لا نعرفه إلا من هذا الوجه)

last statement of the report which says that 'Abû Bakr sent Bilâl with the Prophet was pointed out simultaneously by Al-Dhahabî (d. 748 H.)[1] and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, (d. 751 H.),[2] both mentioning that Bilâl was not born and 'Abû Bakr was a child at that time.

No other incident about the Prophet's early life is, however, on record.

1. Al-Dhahabî, *Mîzân al I'tidâl*, II, 581 (no. 4934).
2. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Zâd al-Ma'âd*, I., 76-77.

CHAPTER VI

THE ORIENTALISTS ON THE PROPHET'S FAMILY STATUS, NAME AND CHILDHOOD

The orientalists have made a number of assumptions and suggesstions regarding the very initial phase of the Prophet's life. These assumptions centre mainly round his family status, his name, the incident of *shaqq al-ṣadr* with the insinuation of epilepsy, his meeting with Baḥîra and some other childhood matters. These are briefly discussed below.

I: REGARDING THE FAMILY STATUS

The first thing to notice about the orientalists' views about the Prophet's early life is their attempt to show that he belonged to an unimportant and humble family of Makka. The suggestion is put forward more pointedly by Margoliouth.[1] His arguments are as follows:

(a) That the "Kuraish in the Koran wonder why a Prophet should be sent to them who was not of noble birth."[2]

(b) That when at the height of his power the Prophet was compared by the Quraysh people "to a palm springing out of a dung-hill."[3]

(c) That on the day of his triumphal entry into Makka the Prophet declared "that an end had now come to the pagan aristocracy by blood", the implication being that he himself was not of aristocratic blood.[4]

(d) That "he himself rejected the title, 'Master and son of our Master' offerd him by some devotee."[5]

(e) That his grandfather, 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, was engaged in money-lending, which profession was "of little esteem in the eyes of the Arabs". And if he dug the Zamzam well and rendered its water potable by mixing it with camel's milk, honey, or raisins, it could not be assumed that "he put himself to this trouble without remuneration". Hence "it would seem that the offices of 'waterer and entertainer' which later writers represent as posts of honour at Meccah resolve themselves into a trade, and one that was not hon-

1. Margoliouth, *op.cit.*, 45-51.
2. *Ibid.*, 47.
3. *Ibid.* (citing *Musnad*, IV, 166.)
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.* (citing *Musnad*, III, 241).

ourable since the Prophet afterwards forbade the sale of water."[1]

(f) That the name 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, "slave of al-Muṭṭalib", though given "a fanciful explanation" by the historians, "is probably to be interpreted as meaning that its owner was at one time actually a slave, though afterwards manumitted and enrolled into the Hashim clan."[2]

(g) That when the Prophet's enemies wished to insult him, they called him "the son of Abu Kabshah" which conveyed some sting; "but what the nature of the insult was we cannot define with certainty."[3]

Now, the proofs thus adduced by Margoliouth to show the Prophet as of humble origin are far-fetched, ill-conceived and based on gross twisting and concealing of the material facts. Thus the very first argument is built on an unjustifiable twisting and tampering with the meaning of a Qur'ânic passage, 43:31, which says: "And they said: 'Why is not this Qur'ân sent down to a big man of the two cities (Makka and Ṭâif)?"[4]. The same objection of the unbelievers is conveyed in 38:8 also which says: "Is it on him, of all of us that the Qur'ân (*al-dhikr*) has been sent down?"[5] Neither in these two passages nor anywhere in the Qur'ân is the slightest indication that the Quraysh unbelievers called in question his family status or said that he did not deserve to be a Prophet because, as Margoliouth twists it, "he was not of noble birth". The clear implication of both the passages is that they did not consider the Prophet as one of the leading men of the two towns and this they said because, in their peculiar notion, only a wealthy and influential individual should be the recipient of Allah's message. They even proceeded from the faulty premise which is mentioned immediately before 38:8, i.e, in 38:4, that any human being like themselves could not be Allah's messenger.[6] It is an admitted fact that the Prophet was no leader in his society, particulary in the presence of his uncles like 'Abû Ṭâlib, 'Abû Lahab and other close relatives from Banû 'Abd Shams and Banû Makhzum, to whom he was but in the position of a young son. It is also worth remembering that leadership in the then Makkan or Arab society was determined on the basis of seniority

1. *Ibid.*, 47-48.
2. *Ibid.*, 48.
3. *Ibid.*, 50-51.
4. 43:31 = ﴿وقالوا لولا نُزّل هذا القرءان على رجل من القريتين عظيم﴾
5. Q. 38:8 = ﴿أءُنزل عليه الذكر من بيننا . . .﴾
6. 38:4 = ﴿وعجبوا أن جاءهم مُنذر منهم . . .﴾

in age which was thought to impart the other qualification, namely, maturity in wisdom. In a tribal society like that at Makka the concept of one family being lower in origin than another is an anathema; for the families and clans constituting the tribe were all descended from the same and not very distant ancestor and also they were closely inter-related by ties of blood and marriage. We of course hear of poets and individuals boasting of the superiority of their respective families or tribes; but these were more often than not marks of the intertribal rivalry and empty claims than true statements of the facts. In citing a Qur'ânic evidence to prove the supposed humble family status of the Prophet, Margoliouth is wrong in three ways. He has distorted the meaning of the Qur'ânic passage or passages which do in no way reflect adversely on the Prophet's origin and family status. Second, he has misunderstood the nature of the Makkan society wherein, though the clans and families were not all equal in wealth and influence, none of them did, nor could, regard the other as of humble origin. Third, he seems to assume that a person of noble birth is invariably a man of means and influence in his society, or that a man of means and influence is invariably of noble birth — both of which assumptions are equally faulty.

With regard to his second argument, Margoliouth has not revealed the whole truth. The report in the *Musnad* which he cites[1] says that once a group of the Helpers (*anṣâr*) came to the Prophet and reported that the Makkans were saying all sorts of things about him, some of them even comparing him to a palm growing out of a dung-hill. On this the Prophet asked those present before him to tell who he was. They all shouted out: "You are the Messenger of Allah". The Prophet said: "I am Muḥammad, son of 'Abd Allah, son of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib" adding, (and here the narrator remarks that he had never before heard the Prophet thus speaking about his ancestry), that Allah had raised him from the best of families in the best of tribes. "So I am the best of you in respect of family, and the best of you as a person."

Margoliouth's use of this report to show the supposed humble family status of the Prophet is faulty in two main respects. He simply grasps at the obviously spiteful remark of the Prophet's avowed enemies, disregarding the many other indisputable facts that prove to the contrary. Secondly, and more seriously, he withholds from his readers the important fact that the Prophet, when he came to know about the malicious remark about him, immediately

1. *Musnad*, IV, 165-166, *ḥadîth* of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib ibn Rabî'ah ibn al-Ḥârith.

protested and mentioned before the audience the names of his father and grandfather in such a way as leaves no room for doubt that they were so well-known figures that they needed no further introduction. In fact many of the *anṣâr* before whom the Prophet thus spoke were 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib's own maternal relatives. The Prophet did not stop there. He specifically pointed out that he belonged to the best family of the best of clans in the best of tribes. By suppressing this very material fact of the Prophet's immediate protestation against his enemies' malicious remark and his unequivocal and public declaration of his most respectable family background Margoliouth has miserably manoeuvred to turn one of the decisive evidences in favour of the Prophet as one against him! That the report in question is one of the strongest evidences in favour of the Prophet's family status is shown by the fact that in his well known index for the traditions Wensinck rightly lists this report under the heading, which is the Prophet's saying: "I am the best of you in respect of family, and the best of you as a person."[1]

As regards the point at (c), namely, that on the day of his triumphal entry into Makka the Prophet declared that "an end had now come to the pagan aristocracy by blood", Margoliouth clearly misconstrues this fact. The declaration was made not because the Prophet himself was of no family; and we have just mentioned above that he had publicly declared that he belonged to the best family in the best tribe. The declaration under reference was made to do away with the root of the pagan evil of blood-feud which often grew out of a false sense of honour and family pride; and also to emphasize that a person's real claim to honour lay in the purity of his faith and in the justice and greatness of his acts, rather than in his family origin.

Similarly misleading is the argument at (d), namely, that the Prophet himself rejected the title, 'Master, and son of our Master', by which he was once addressed by a person. The Prophet discountenanced the form of address not because he was of no respectable family origin but because, as the report which Margoliouth cites in his support[2] clearly states, he did not like to adopt any other title except the one, "Messenger of Allah" (*Rasûl Allah*), which Allah had bestowed on him. Margoliouth's fallacy would be obvious if we recall the Qur'ânic passage 33:40 which forbids addressing the Prophet

1. A.J. Wensinck, *Miftâh Kunûz al-Sunnah*, (Ar. tr. by F.A. Bâqî), p. 436. The heading is: (فانا خيركم بيتا وخيركم نفسا)

2. *Musnad* III, 241.

as the "Father of so-and-so". No one would use this passage to argue that the Prophet was childless and therefore no father of any individual! As in the report under discussion, so also this Qur'ânic passage specifically enjoins addressing him as *Rasûl Allah* instead of using any other form of address.

Equally fallacious and far-fetched is his argument at (e). He refers to a document mentioned by Ibn al-Nadîm[1] which purports to have been written by 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib himself and which records that a certain Himyarite of Ṣan'â' (Yaman) owed him one thousand silver *dirhams*. From this fact Margoliouth infers "that Abd al-Muṭṭalib was possessed of some capital and occasionally lent it out".[2] Now, Ibn al-Nadîm mentions this document found in *Khalîfah* al-Ma'mûn's treasury by way of tracing the development of Arabic writing. There is no indication whatsoever that the money was lent by 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib on interest. The debt recorded could as well have arisen out of business transactions, remembering the fact that the Quraysh, particularly Banû Hâshim, carried on trade with Yaman as well as Abyssinia. It is simply unlikely that a Makkan capitalist at that time would lend money on interest to an individual of so distant a land. Moreover, if at all it was so lent, the rate of interest would invariably have been indicated in the document. But Margoliouth argues in a circle. He states: "In order to harmonize the fact of his ['Abd al-Muṭṭalib's] wealth with the fact of his being in a humble station we have to suppose that the profession in which his money was made was not an honbourable one."[3] Thus Margoliouth first assumes that 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib was a person "in a humble station", which is not proved by any independent evidence. But proceeding from this initially unsubstantiated assumption Margoliouth makes the second assumption that since 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib was a man in humble satation, the wealth found in his possession must have been made by "not an honourable profession". And from this second assumption Margoliouth goes on to avdance the third assumption that since his money was earned not by an honourable profession, 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib must have been a man of humble origin! Needless to point out that no sober historian would proceed to vilify a historical figure on the basis of such a circle of unsubstantiated assumptions. Moreover, Margoliouth's underlying assumption that money-lending as such was an unhonourable

1. See Ibn al-Nadîm, *Fihrist*, Dâr al-Ma'rifah, Beirut, 1398 / 1978, pp. 7-8.
2. Margoliouth, *op. cit.*, 47-48.
3. *Ibid.*, 48.

profession in pre-Islamic Arabia is not at all correct. The evidence adduced by him on this point, that of the poets' boastings of their skill in eluding the creditors' claims,[1] is both questionable and un-convincing.

Equally untenable is the innuendo that 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib turned the offices of "waterer and entertainer", which he held, into trade by selling the water of Zamzam. There is no evidence to show that he did so. On the other hand, if he dug and renovated the Zamzam well and made its water available to the public and the pilgrims, as Margoliouth admits, and if he held the offices of waterer and entertainer to the pilgrims for over half a century, which by all accounts he did, he did so no doubt with the support and acquiescence of the Makkan people in general. And this fact is a decisive evidence of his preeminence and leadership in the Makkan society.

The most preposterous is Margoliouth's assertion noted at (f). He translates the name 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib as Al-Muṭṭalib's slave and states that this means that "its owner was actually a slave, though afterwards manumitted and enrolled in the Hâshim clan". He rejects" as "fanciful" the account given in the histories about the origin of this name;[2] but he himself advances no positive evidence in support of his own three-fold fancy, namely, (a) that 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib was originally a slave; (b) that he was subsequently manumitted and (c) that he was then enrolled in the Hâshim clan. All these arbitrary assumptions are based simply on a literal transiation of the name. The translation is not quite correct, in that *'abd* is a more general term usually signifying 'servant' rather than slave, for which the more accurate expression is *raqîq*. That Margoliouth's fancy is quite beside the mark is evident from the fact that in the the contemporary Makkan society an actual slave was seldom addressed or known as the *'abd* of so-and so. Slaves who were subsequently manumitted, such a Bilâl, 'Ammâr and Khabbâb, were never known as the *'abds* of their respective masters. A son of Quṣayy, founder of the greatness of Quraysh, was called 'Abd (or 'Abd Quṣayy). He was no slave. Nor was 'Abd Manâf the "slave" of Manâf. Had 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib been a manumitted slave admitted into Banû Hâshim, he would never have been accepted in pre-Islamic Makka as the dignitary in charge of the affairs of the Ka'ba, discharging the functions of "waterer and entertainer" to the pilgrims, however much Margoliouth underestimates those functions. Nor

1. *Ibid.*, 48-49.

2. See *supra*, p. 120 for the origin of the name.

could 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib marry the daughters of the most respectable clans, including Banû Makhzûm; nor could 'Abû Lahab, the son of the supposedly manumitted slave, marry the daughter of Ḥarb ibn 'Umayyah, sister of 'Abû Sufyân, all of whom are regarded as of higher and better families by Margoliouth and his followers of the orientalists.

Finally, as in the case of his argument at (b), so also in his argument at (g) Margoliouth simply grasps at the abusive remark of the Prophet's enemy and suppresses the other material facts connected with the incident wherein the Prophet was referred to as the son of 'Abû Kabshah. Margoliouth says that great uncertainty prevails as to the identity of 'Abû Kabshah; but he acknowledges that while some applied it to the Prophet's foster-father, the "patronymic" was "fairly common."[1] In fact, the expression did not refer to any real person. The expression "son of 'Abû Kabshah" was only an abusive term which the Arabs used commonly to apply to persons against whom they bore ill-will and anger.[2] Margoliouth's allusion is obviously to 'Abû Sufyân's remark which he made privately to his companion when both of them were miserably discomfited at the court of Heraclius who interrogated him on receipt of the Prophet's letter.[3] Finding that the Byzantine ruler was favourably disposed towards the Prophet 'Abû Sufyân disgustingly whispered to his companion saying that "the affair of the son of 'Abû Kabshah" had prevailed even at Heraclius's court.[4] While citing this malicious and private remark of 'Abû Sufyân's in order to show the Prophet's allegedly humble family status, Margoliouth omits to note that the same 'Abû Sufyân on the same occasion and in the same report is found to declare publicly in reply to the very first question put to him by Heraclius, that the Prophet was of noble family. More importantly, 'Abû Sufyân adds that he would have attempted to speak lies against the Prophet had he ('Abû Sufyân) not feared being contradicted by the other Makkans who were presant at Heraclius's court and whom the latter had specifically asked to contradict 'Abû Sufyân if he spoke anything not true. Thus the very incident and report which Margoliouth twists in order to prove his assumption is in fact another very strong evidence showing the noble family status of the Prophet, publicy acknowledged

1. Margoliouth, *op. cit.*, 50-51.
2. *Fatḥ al-Bârî*, I., 53.
3. *Bukhârî*, No. 6.
4. The Arabic exression is: (لقد أمر أمر ابن أبي كبشة)

in a foreign court by his then arch-enemy, 'Abû Sufyân.

As for Watt, he appears to adopt Margoliouth's conclusion about the Prophet's family status without, however, recapitulating the former's arguments. Thus he at times explicitly states and at other times implies that the Prophet did not belong to the aristocratic group of families.[1] Watt also cites the Qur'ânic passage 43:31 to show the Prophet's ordinary position in the society, though elsewhere he (Watt) suggests that during the first few years of his mission the Prophet had grown sufficiently important to induce the Quraysh leaders to make him offers of compromise. Watt makes, however, a completely new conjecture about 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib's role during Abrahah's expedition against Makka, making him appear in a very unfavourable light. Watt assumes a prolonged trade rivalry between Banû Hâshim and other Quraysh clans like 'Abd Shams, Nawfal and Makhzûm and states that 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib's negotiations with Abrahah "ought to be interpreted as a party move of a small group of Quraysh (along with the tribes of Du'il and Hudhayl) from which the main body of the Quraysh held aloof. If that is so, then 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib was presumably trying to get support form the Abyssinians against his rivals among Quraysh, such as the clans of 'Abd Shams, Nawfal and Makhzûm... We cannot be sure whether Abrahah accepted the overtures of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib or whether, judging him not strong enough, he rejected them. In any case the expedition came to nothing..."[2]

Now, Watt's theory of a prolonged trade rivalry between Banû Hâshim and other clans (and his economic interpretation of rise of Islam generally) we shall have occasion to deal with a little later on in this work.[3] Here it may be noted that his conjecture about 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib's role is totally wrong and irrational. It is wrong, and directly contrary to the sources, to say that 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib's action was a "move of a small group of Quraysh" to obtain "support from the Abyssinians against his rivals among Quraysh". He had gone to Abrahah's camp as the leader and spokesman of the Makkans and after they, along with Banû Kinânah and Banu Hudhayl had decided about their inability to offer resistance to Abrahah's forces.[4] Also, it was Abrahah who had sent his messenger to Makka to meet its "chief" and in

1. Watt, *M. at. M.*, p. 49.
2. Watt, *M. at M.*, 14.
3. See *infra*, Chap. XXIV.
4. *Supra*, pp: 41.

effect to deliver to him an ultimatum requiring him to abandon the Ka'ba in order to avoid loss of the Makkans' lives. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib's visit to Abrahah's camp was a sequel to this move made by Abrahah himself. His messenger met 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib because he was found to be the virtual chief and spokesman for the Makkan community as a whole. And if he was accompanied by the chief of Du'il and Hudhayl that means they also went to Abrahah's camp in accordance with the joint decision of Makkans and the neighbouring tribes not to offer armed resistance to the Abyssinian invader and to try to persuade him to return without destroying the Ka'ba. The report cited by Ibn Isḥâq also mentions the important fact that they all offered Abrahah one-third of the wealth of Tihâmah if he only spared the city and the Ka'ba. All these facts squarely belie all three of Watt's assumptions. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib went to Abrahah's camp not at the head of a small group of Quraysh from which thier main body held themselves aloof, but as the leader and spokesman for all of them. He did not go there to seek any advantage from Abrahah, but to persuade him, even by offering substantial material benefits to him, to leave the city and its temple alone. The main body of the Quraysh did not remain silent or indifferent to the negotiations which were open and were carried out on their behalf.

Watt's assumptions are also contrary to reason. Abrahah came acknowledgedly to destory the Ka'ba and thereby the commercial primacy of Makka in Arabia. This being the main issue, it is simply unreasonable to assume that he would be amenable to making a commercial deal with a small and allegedly unimportant group of Makkans giving them trade advantages over their supposedly wealthier and stronger rivals in the same city. How could even one of that city, with an iota of common sense left in him, approach Abrahah with such a proposal when his objective was all too clear, namely, destruction of the commercial position of Makka as a whole, and not of that of any section of its traders? Abrahah had made all the preparations and had come all the way to realize that all-absorbing purpose of his. Hence, if he was at all to be dissuaded from carrying out his design, it was he who was to receive some convincingly favourable terms, rather than any section of the city who could expect to receieve some advantageous terms from him. The position is thus just the reverse of what Watt would have us believe. And, again, how could the supposedly stronger and commercially superior clans of the city remain idle or silent in the situation, and why did they not denounce 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib then or subsequently as a traitor and fifth-

columnist? After all, his negotiations with Abrahah were no secret affair. Watt appers to have been so preoccupied with his assumption of a commercial rivalry between 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib and the other clans, and of the former's supposedly inferior position at the time, that these simple questions do not occur to him at all. His statement that we "cannot be sure whether Abrahah accepted the overtures of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib or whether, judging him not strong enough, he rejected them", is a naive attempt to confuse the issue. In fact, instead of placing the facts in a straight way and thereby showing 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib's supposedly inferior commercial position at the time, Watt, like Margoliouth, argues in a circle. He says that 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib's negotiations with Abrahah "ought to be interpreted" as a party move by a small Quraysh group and then says: "If that is so, then 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib was presumably trying to get support from the Abyssinians against his rivals among Quraysh"; and as he is *presumed* to have done so, the other Quraysh clans like 'Abd Shams and Nawfal "had apparently by this time seized most of the trade with Syria and Yemen which had formerly belonged to Hâshim and al-Muṭṭalib."[1] This is clearly arguing in a circle and basing one unsubstantiated assumption upon another.

To sum up, the Margoliouth-Watt assumption of an unimportant family origin for the Prophet and of an inferior social position for 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib is belied by an array of indisputable facts, the most important of which are as follows:

(1) All the Quraysh clans descended from the same person, Fihr (Quraysh) and their greatness at Makka was established by Quṣayy, 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib's great-grandfather.

(2) The commercial greatness of the Makkan Quraysh was initiated by 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib's father Hâshim who, by a series of trade pacts with the Byzantine authorities and others, secured tangible trade adavantages for the Quraysh in Syria, Yaman and Abyssinia, besides securing safe journey for the Quraysh caravans through the tribal territories.

(3) All the Quraysh clans at Makka were closely related, one to another, by ties of blood as well as marriage, so that it would be a sheer anathema to conceive for one clan a superior family origin to that of another. Particularly, there was no Quraysh clan with which the members of Banû Hâshim, the Prophet's clan, were not so related. That is why he, in the face of his kins-

1. Watt, *M. at M.*, 14.

men's opposition, applealed to them saying that he did not expect any material advantage from them except love and consideration due to the near ones.[1]

(4) 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, the Prophet's grandfather, discovered and re-excavated the Zamzam well, which in itself was an epoch-making event in the life of the Quraysh as a whole and which further ensured their pre-eminence over all the Arabs. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib held the offices of "waterer and entertainer" to the pilgrims for over half a century for which he became a well-known figure throughout Arabia. The simple mention of his name was a sufficient introduction for him and his family. It was he, as the virtual leader of the Makkans, with whom Abrahah carried on negotiations and it was on his advice that the Quraysh as a whole betook themselves to the hills in order to save themselves from Abrahah's army. It was 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, again, who consigned the Ka'ba, on behalf of all the Quraysh, to Allah's care beseeching Him to protect it as His House. The miraculous destruction of Abrahah's army was naturally looked upon as Allah's response to that prayer and the whole episode heightened the prestige of the House and of the Quraysh as a whole in the eyes of all the Arabs.

(5) 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib had contracted marriage relations with almost all important Quraysh clans. One of his wives, mother of 'Abd Allah and thus the Prophet's full grandmother, was a Makhzûmite lady. Thus the Prophet combined in his veins the blood of Banû Makhzûm, through his grandmather, of Banû Zuhrah, through his mother and of Banû Hâshim, through his father. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib's other sons and daughters too were married to important clans like Makhzûm and 'Abd Shams.

(6) The leading opponents of the Prophet, whom the orientalists appear to depict as members of high and respectable families, were none but his close kins. For instance the leaders of Banû 'Abd Shams were 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib's own uncle 'Abd Shams's descendants; while the leaders of Banû 'Abd al-Dâr were 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib's father Hâshim's own paternal cousin Asad's descendants.

(7) Finally, Banû Hâshim alone, under the leadership of 'Abû Ṭâlib, offered protection to the Prophet against the opposition of all the other

1. Q. 42:23 = ﴿... قل لا أسئلكم عليه أجراً إلا المودة في القربى...﴾

"Say, 'No reward do I ask of you for this (work of mine) except the love of those of near of kin.'"

Quraysh clans and successfully withstood their boycott and blockade for nearly three years. The other clans, though they were combined in opposition to the Prophet and were determined upon killing him, did not dare do so simply for fear of a bloody conflict with Banû Hâshim. Nothing could be a more decisive evidence showing that despite the vicissitudes in Banû Hâshim's fortune it was still socially and physically a match for all the Makkan clans combined.

It was thus not for nothing that the Prophet publicly claimed, and his enemy 'Abû Sufyân publicly affirmed, that he was raised from the best family of the best tribe of the Arabs. But he did not claim any greatness, nor the allegiance of his followers, on that score. On the contrary he emphasized the essential equality of men and enunciated that one's nobility and greatness lies in the quality of one's faith, character and acts. Hence Islam does not attach any false value to mere "noble" pedigree. That is no reason, however, why the Prophet's noble pedigree should not be recognized as a historical fact.

II. REGARDING HIS NAME

The orientalists have similarly attempted to create confusion about the Prophet's name. The first modern scholar to agitate doubts about it seems to be Aloy Sprenger.[1] Taking his cue from a report reproduced in *Al-Sîrat al-Ḥalabiyyah*[2] Sprenger stated that the original name of the Prophet was "Qutham" but it was subsequently changed to "Muḥammad". Sprenger made this statement in such a way as to convey an impression that there elapsed a considerable time between the adoption of the first and second names.

Now, it is worth noting that earlier in the same chapter of his work Al-Ḥalabî reproduces several other reports showing that the name "Muḥammad" was agreed upon by the child's mother ('Âminah) and grandfather ('Abd al-Muṭṭalib) and that the latter held a feast on the seventh day of the child's

1. A scholar of Austrian origin with deep Christianizing sympathies, Aloy Sprenger was appointed Principal of the Calcutta Madrasah (1852-1854) by the English East India Company's administration for the purpose of de-Islamizing that institution by eliminating from its courses of study all that constituted real Islamic subjects, including the Qur'ân and *ḥadîth*. He started writing his work on the Prophet at that time. It was subsequently published under the title: *Das Leben Und Die Lehre Des Mohamed* (Ester Band, Berlin, 1861; Zweiter Band, Berlin, 1862 and Dritter Band, Berlin, 1865).

2. 'Alî ibn Burhân al-Dîn al-Ḥalabî (975-1044), *Al-Sîrat al-Ḥalabiyyah Fî al-Sirât al-'Amîn al-Ma'mûn.*

birth and publicly announced his name as "Muḥammad"(ﷺ).[1] Even the report relied upon by Sprenger shows clearly that the name Muḥammad was finally decided upon only a few hours at the latest after the child's birth. The report runs as follows:[2]

"In the *Imtâ'*[3] it is reported that when Qath'am ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib died at the age of nine, three years before the birth of the Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be on him, 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib was greatly grieved. So, when the Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be on him, was born, he named him 'Qutham', till his mother 'Âminah informed 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib that she had been instructed in a dream to name the child 'Muḥammad'. Thereupon he ('Abd al-Muṭṭalib) named him 'Muḥammad'.

It is thus clear that the report simply describes what transpired immediately after the birth of the child, and definitely before the seventh day of his life when the *'aqîqah* ceremony was held and the public and formal announcement of his name was made.

Almost simultaneously with Sprenger, Muir advanced his remarks about the Prophet's name. He did not of course refer to the name 'Qutham', but otherwise attempted to create confusion about the name, particularly the name 'Ahmad'. He suggested that this latter form was adopted by the Muslims and became favourite with them for their confrontation with the Christians and Jews because it fell in line with the "supposed" prophecy about their Prophet in the Bible. Muir writes:[4]

"This name [Muḥammad] was rare among the Arabs but not unknown.... Another form is Aḥmad, which having been erroneously employed as a translation of 'The Paraclete' in some Arabic version of the New Testament, became a favourite term with Mahometans, especially in addressing Jews and Christians; for it was (they said) the title under which the Prophet had been in their books predicted."

In a note added to this statement Muir further stated:[5]

"The word Ahmad must have occurred by mistake in some early Arabic translation

1. *Al-Sîrat al-Ḥalabiyyah*, Beirut reprint, 1400 / 1980, pp. 128-130.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 131. The Arabic text runs as follows:

(وفي الإمتاع: لما مات قثم بن عبد المطلب قبل مولد رسول الله ﷺ بثلاث سنين وهو ابن تسع سنين وجد عليه وجدا شديدا. فلما ولد رسول الله ﷺ سماه قثم حتى أخبرته أمه آمنه أنها أمرت في منامها أن تسميه محمداً فسماه محمدا.)

3. Al-Maqrîzî, Taqî al-Dîn Aḥmad 'Alî, *Imtâ' al-'Asmâ' bimâ li'al-Rasûl min al-Anbâ' wa 'l-Amwâl wa al-Ḥafadah wa al-Mutâ'*

4. W. Muir, *The Life of Mahomet*, Vol. 1., London, 1858, p. 16. (Third edition, London, 1894, p. 5).

5. *Ibid.*, first edition, p. 17, n.

of John's Gospel, for 'the Comforter',... or was forged as such by some ignorant or designing monk in Mahomet's time. Hence the partiality for this name, which was held to be a promise or prophecy of Mahomet."

The subject of Biblical prophecy about the Prophet needs a separate treatment. Here only the main weaknesses of Muir's remarks may be noticed. It is well known that the Muslim historians, while dicussing the novelty of the name 'Muḥammad', themselves take care to note that a few other persons had been named 'Muḥammad' because their parents had by chance come to know from some well-informed Christian monk that there was a prophecy in the Bible about the advent of a Prophet who was expected to appear very shortly and who would bear the name 'Muḥammad'. Hence each of the parents named their son 'Muḥammad' with the fond hope that he might turn out to be the expected Prophet.[1] It is also noted that the persons so named were all contemporaries with the Prophet and most of them were born close to the time of his call to Prophethood.[2] Muir is aware of this fact and the reason thus given by the historians for the parents' thus naming their children; but he dismisses this reason as "the usual Mahometan credulity and desire" to "exhibit anticipation of the Prophet."[3]

Muir thus in effect relies upon one aspect of the information supplied by the Muslim historians and rejects and ridicules the other aspect of the same piece of information. Thus he avoids mentioning directly that the historians state that the Prophet was given the names of both Muḥammad and Aḥmad since his infancy, and refers to the form 'Aḥmad' in a roundabout way saying that it "became a favourite term with Mahometans, especially in addressing Jews and Christians", because the name was supposed to have been mentioned in the latter's holy scriptures. But since the name Aḥmad did really occur in the then current Arabic version of the Bible Muir proceeds to explain it away by two futher unsubstantiated assumptions, namely, that it (Aḥmad) was an "erroneous" translation of "The Paraclete" mentioned in the New Testament and that it "was forged as such by some ignorant or designing monk in Mahomet's time." Clearly Muir here betrays the weakness of his assumption. If, in the first instance, it was a question of mere mis-

1. See for instance Suhaylî, I (Dâr al-Fikr edition), p. 182 and *Al-Sîrat al-Ḥalabiyyah*, I., p. 131.

2. *Ibid.* See also Muḥammad Rawwâs Qal'ajî, *Al-Tafsîr al-Siyâsî li al-Sîrah*, etc., Beirut, 1399 / 1979, pp. 17-18.

3. Muir, *op. cit.*, first edition, p. 17, n.

translation in the Arabic version of the Bible, an indication of the mistake would have been decisive on the point. But Muir is evidently not sure. Hence he falls back on the alternative of alleging forgery on the part of some "ignorant or designing monk in Mahomet's time." Why such a monk, if there was any, should have undertaken the questionable expedient of committing a forgery while translating the Bible during the Prophet's time is not explained by Muir. Following his own assertion, however, the inescapable corollary would be that the so-called designing monk would insert the name Aḥmad in the alleged translation to show the compatibility of the text with the name only if the Prophet had already been bearing it. In other words, Muir's own assumption presupposes that the Prophet had been bearing that name at the time.

Muir's other assumption that the term Aḥmad became a favourite with the Muslims because it was found in the alleged mistaken translation of the Biblical text tends to imply that the name in question was adopted later on when they became aware of its existence in the Bible—an implication which is in no way supported by the known facts, nor by reason. Simplified, the twin assumption of Muir's with their implications would stand as follows: The Prophet had been bearing the name Aḥmad since his early life and as such a desiging monk made a forged and mistaken translation of the word 'Paraclete' occurring in the New Testament as 'Aḥmad'; and since the expression 'Aḥmad' was found in the Arabic version of the New Testament, that term became favourite with the Muslims. Nothing could be more confusing than such arguing in a circle.

In fact the tenor and purport of Muir's assumptions is to nullify and neutralize the Biblical prediction about the Prophet, which is neither a question of mistaken translation nor a subsequent development. In the Qur'ân it is claimed that the coming of the Prophet was foretold in the previously revealed scriptures and that this fact was known to the "People of the Book".[1] To this claim neither the Prophet's contemporary Christians and Jews, nor the unbelieving Makkans who were in close touch with the latter in the matter of opposition to him, gave a lie at that time. Both the names Muḥammad and Aḥmad for the Prophet occur in the Qur'ân. Therefore it is simply incorrect to state that either of these names was adopted subsequently when the Muslims began to confront the Jews and Christians. Nor could it be reasonably suggested that the Prophet adopted either of these names at a

1. Q. 7:157. See also Q. 2:146; 6:20.

later stage in his life when he had already claimed to have received the call to Prophethood or in the Madina period when he had been fairly established in his mission; for there was no point in taking the questionable step of changing his personal name at that stage just to make the new name conform with the Biblical text. Such a step at that stage would have only exposed his weakness, instead of imparting any strength to his claim, and would in all likelihood have created serious misgivings in the ranks of his own followers, if not causing the desertion of many. It would also have been a very effective point of attack on him by his adversaries and detractors.

The twin assumptions of Muir that 'Aḥmad' is a mistaken translation of the text in the New Testament and that the name is a later adoption or popularization by the Muslims in the course of their confrontation with the Jews and Christians have been taken over, in some form or other, by subsequent Christian apologists and orientalists. Hence, on the one hand, attempts have been made to show that the Biblical text does not really contain any prophecy about the Prophet of Islam;[1] and, on the other, it has been suggested that the Qur'ânic expression in 61:6—"His name is Aḥmad" (اسمه أحمد)—is a later interpolation,[2] or that the expression *Aḥmad* in that passage "must be taken in an adjectival sense rather than regarded as an interpolation."[3]

It is not necessary here to enter into the question of Biblical prophecy about Muḥammad (ﷺ), but it must be noted that in so far as the latter two assumptions are concerned they are merely elaborations of Muir's suggestion that the name Aḥmad became a favourite with the Muslims at a subsequent stage.

The assumption that the Qur'ânic statement at 61:6, "His name is Aḥmad", is a later interpolation is based mainly on two grounds. (1) That Ibn Isḥâq (Ibn Hishâm), while saying that the Syriac expression *Almunhamanna* means "Muḥammad", does not refer to this Qur'ânic passage, though he

1. See for instance Bevan Jones, "Paraclete or Muḥammad" *M.W.*, April, 1920, Vol. 10, pp. 112-125; James Robson, "Does the Bible speak of Muḥammad", *ibid.* January, 1935, Vol. 25, pp. 17-26.

2. A. Gutherie & E.F.I. Bishop, "The Paraclete and Aḥmad", *ibid.*, October, 1951, Vol. 41, pp. 251-256, specially p. 253.

3. W.M. Watt, "His name is Aḥmad", *ibid.*, April, 1953, Vol. 43, pp. 110-117. Watt has recently republished this article in a collection of his essays under caption *Early Islam*, Edinburgh University Press, 1991. In the preface Watt says that in these articles he has elaborated the arguments that are not to be found in his other books.

freely quotes the Qur'ân in appropriate contexts throughout his work. (2) The details in Ibn Isḥâq's passage differ from those in the Qur'ânic passage. For instance, in "the Qur'ân the words are addressed to 'children of Israel': in the work of Ibn Hishâm they are the 'people of the Injîl'."[1]

Now, apart form the obviously slender nature of the arguments thus adduced, it is simply an absurd proposition that the Muslims, in the second or third century of Islam, would interpolate the statement in the Qur'ân by taking their cue form Ibn Isḥâq (d.150/153) or Ibn Hishâm (d.213/218). Moreover, in making such an alleged interpolation they would not certainly use a name by which the Prophet was not known to his contemporaries, and that also instead of the word given as the meaning of *Almunhamanna* by Ibn Isḥâq / Ibn Hishâm.

Realizing these obvious defects in the Gutherie-Bishop suggestion Watt quickly came up with his alternative suggestion. He says that the word *Aḥmad* is used in 61:6 in an adjectival sense, rather than as name, and adds that the object which Gutherie and Bishop "were contending for could be secured by a simpler supposition, namely, that *for the first century of Islam the word aḥmadu was regarded not as a proper name but as an adjective*."[2] Surveying the names of persons obtainable from such works as Ibn Sa'd's *Ṭabaqât*, Ibn al-'Athîr's *'Usd al-Ghâbah* and Ibn Ḥajar's *Tahdhîb al-Tahdhîb* Watt states: "Muslim children were practically never called Aḥmad before about the year 125." He puts his case "even more strongly" thus: "*it is impossible to prove that any Muslim child was called Aḥmad after the Prophet before about the year 125.*"[3] Watt notes that the name "Aḥmad, like Muḥammad, occurred in the jâhiliyah", but this, he says, could not have any reference to the Prophet.[4] Similarly he notes that a poem attributed to Ḥassân ibn Thâbit speaks of an Aḥmad who fell at the battle of Mu'tah; and "an obscure poetess" speaks of a man who counted as false the religion of God and of "the man Aḥmad".[5] But he treats Ḥassân's poem as not authentic and explains away the "obscure" poetess's statement as only "calling the Prophet 'most praised'", and not necessarily by name. Thus guarding himself against

1. *Gutherie* and Bishop, *op. cit.*, pp. 252-254. See also Ibn Hishâm, I., 253.
2. Watt, in *M.W.*, *op. cit.*, 113.
3. *Ibid.*, 110. The italicization is Watt's.
4. *Ibid.*, 111.
5. *Ibid.*, 117.

what he calls "possible early instances of the use of 'Aḥmad'" Watt stipulates that "an opponent" who intends to refute his theory "would not merely have to produce some Aḥmads in the first and early second century, but would have to show, or at least make it seem probable, that in each case the name was given with reference to the Prophet and was not just a continuation of the pre-Islamic usage."[1]

The stipulation is clearly exceptional; which perhaps betrays an awareness of a three-fold basic weakness of the theory as a whole . It seems to recognize, in the first instance, that the works consulted deal only with certain specified classes of people and are not a register of the names of all Muslims who lived in the first and the first quarter of the second century of Islam. Obviously it is hazardous to conclude from a perusal of these works only that Muslim children were never called Aḥmad before about the year 125. Secondly, the stipulation appears to recognize the unreasonableness of the assumption that while the name Aḥmad was current in pre-Islamic time, "for the first century or so of Islam the word *aḥmadu* was regarded not as a proper name but as a simple adjective." It is not understandable why, if Aḥmad was a name in pre-Islamic time, the expression should have been taken only in an adjectival sense in the first century of Islam or that it was only a continuation of the pre-Islamic usage. The proposition seems to have been rested on the further assumption that the use of the word in the Qur'ânic passage 61:6 is in the adjectival sense. But Watt does not prove this first. On the contrary, he seems to argue from the opposite direction. He first supposes that the word was regarded as a simple adjective in the first centruy of Islam, and then makes this supposition the basis of his further assumption that the Qur'ânic use of the term is therefore adjectival. It may be pointed out that even if it is proved that the Qur'ânic use of the term is in an adjectival sense, that does not necessarily mean that its use in the first century should invariably be in that sense alone, or that it should otherwise be regarded as a continuation of the pre-Islamic usage. Names like 'Abd Allah, Khâlid, Al-'Âṣ, etc. were equally prevalent in pre-Islamic times, and these were subsequently given to Muslim children not as a continuation of the pre-Islamic usage but because their meanings were in conformity with Islamic beliefs. Also, most Muslim names, such as Sa'id, Khâlid, Al-'Âṣ, and the like are "adjectives" as words; but that fact, far from deterring, rather justifies their use as personal names. This brings us to the third inherent weak-

1. *Ibid.*, 111.

ness in Watt's stipulation. Whenever a Muslim child is named Aḥmad or Muḥammad , it is implicitly recognized that this is done in deference to the Prophet's names. Seldom is it expressly stated or recorded that this is the reason for selecting the name. Watt seems to recognize this natural presumption and attempts to circumvent it by making the unusual stipulation mentioned above.

Apart from the above, however, Watt is wrong in all three of his premises, namely, (a) that no Muslim child was called Aḥmad after the Prophet before about the year 125; (b) that the word during this whole period was used only as an adjective and (c) that in the Qur'ânic passage 61:6 it is used in an adjectival sense.

As to the incorrectness of the first challenging assumption, every serious student of the Arabic language is conversant with the name of Al-Khalîl ibn Aḥmad ibn 'Amr, the famous grammarian and founder of the science of Arabic prosody (*'ilm al-'arûḍ*). He was born in 100 H. and died in 170 or 175. In describing his biography Ibn Khallikân specifically states that Al-Khalîl's father, Aḥmad, is said to be the first person who was so named after the Prophet.[1] The claim of his being the *first* bearer of the name after the Prophet does not appear to be quite correct; but there is no doubt that he was so named after the Prophet. And since his son Al-Khalîl was born in 100 H., he (Aḥmad) must have been born in the seventies of the first century of Islam at the latest.

One of the first Muslim children to be named Aḥmad, if not the very first, was Aḥmad ibn Ja'far ibn 'Abî Ṭâlib (al-Hâshimî). Both Ja'far and his wife 'Asmâ' bint 'Umays were among the earliest Muslims and both migrated to Abyssinia where 'Asmâ' gave birth to four sons named respectively 'Abd Allah, 'Awn, Muḥammad and Aḥmad.[2] In view of the zeal and spirit characteristic of the early converts to Islam it cannot be assumed that the naming of their children as 'Abd Allah, Muḥammad and Aḥmad was just a continuation of the pre-Islamic usage. Nor could it be suggested that the use of Aḥmad in this instance was as a simple adjective. On the contrary, there is every reason to believe that they selected the names becuase these were in accord with their newly imbibed Islamic concepts. Particularly the naming of

1. Ibn Khallikân, *Wafayât al-'A'yân* (ed. Dr. Ḥasan 'Abbâs), Vol. I., Beriut (1969?), p. 248.

(ويقال إن أباه أحمد أول من سمي بأحمد بعد رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم)

2. *Al-'Iṣâbah*, nos. 408 and 51 (*Kitâb al-Nisâ'*).

the two youngest sons respectively as Muḥammad and Aḥmad suggests that this was done after the names of the Prophet.

Another very early instance is the naming of 'Abd ibn Jaḥsh's son as Aḥmad. 'Abd and his wife Fari'ah bint 'Abî Sufyân were among the earliest Muslims. The authorities differ as to whether they migrated to Abyssinia; but there is no doubt that 'Abd was among the first couple of Muslims to migrate to Madina. That they named the child after the Prophet is evident from the fact that while singing the praise of the Prophet Fari'ah took special pride in being known as 'Umm Aḥmad (Mother of Aḥmad). 'Abd was similarly better known as 'Abû Aḥmad, and is entered in the *'Iṣâbah* under that surname.[1]

A little later in point of time , but definitely born in the first century of Islam, we get another Aḥmad, who was better known by his *kunya* of 'Abû Ṣakhr. He used to take traditions from Yazîd al-Raqâshî.[2] This latter person died in 110 or 120 H.[3] More such names could be found if the sources are carefully looked into. It should be clear from the instances cited how very unteneble is the claim that hardly any Muslim child was named 'Aḥmad' after the Prophet before about the year 125 H.

Watt rejects the reference to the Prophet as Aḥmad in Ḥassân ibn Thâbit's poem[4] on the ground that these poems are not authentic. The poetical materials in the *sîrah* literature are of course suspect.[5] But Watt himself elsewhere accepts the information contained in such materials as genuine on the ground that apart from the question of the genuineness of such poems, they reflect the actual state of affairs.[6] On the same ground it may be said that the poem of Ḥassân under reference speaks of the Prophet by the very name which he actually bore. For, it is just not reasonable to assume that poems were forged in order to give currency to a new and hitherto unknown name for the Prophet. This is all the more unlikely in the case of the poem under reference because, as Watt says, in it the Prophet "is given an undignified position".[7] Surely in such a composition he would not be given a new name signifying

1. *Ibid.*, no. 10 (*Bâb al-Kunâ*).
2. Ibn Sa'd, I, 436.
3. *Tahdhîb al-Tahdhîb*, XI, 311.
4. See Ibn Hishâm, II, 384-385 for the poem.
5. See W. 'Arafât, "Early Critics of the authenticity of the poetry of the Sîra", *B.S.O.AS.*, XXI (1958).
6. Watt, *M. at M.*, 121.
7. *M.W.*, Vol. 43, p. 117.

that he is the most praised one!

With reference to the other piece of information, i.e., the couplet of an "obscure poetess", as she is called,[1] Watt does not find any "obvious reasons" for considering it unauthentic. But he attempts to explain it away as follows: "It looks then, as if we should have to admit an occasional reference to the Prophet as Aḥmad *in poetry*, for the sake of metre, from his own time onwards... Aḥmad means 'more or most praised' whereas Muḥammad merely means 'praised'. There would be nothing improper in a poet calling the Prophet 'most praised'."[2] Thus Watt admits that it is a contemporary reference in poetry to the Prophet as Aḥmad, but he says that "for the sake of metre" the expression has been inserted here as an adjective for "the person" (*al-mar'*). This explanation is untenable for the simple grammatical reason that if it was intended as an adjective it ought to have been rendered "definite" by prefixing *al* (ال) to it, as the noun, *al-mar'*, which the word is said to qualify, is in the definite form; for the rule of compatibility in respect of definiteness and indefiniteness of both the *mauṣûf* and *ṣifah* is indispensable in Arabic. The expression 'Aḥmad' in the couplet under reference must therefore be taken as a name for the Prophet.

Watt also characterizes the instance as "an occasional reference to the Prophet as Aḥmad" and adds that this was so "from his own time onwards." Yes; Aḥamd was used for the Prophet "from his own time onwards", and this was so used as his name, not as an adjective for him. Watt has not taken the trouble to show that all such uses of the term Aḥmad from the Prophet's time onwards were made for the sake of meeting the requirements of metre and as adjectives! Nor is it correct that it is only at two places in Ibn Hishâm's work that Aḥmad is given as the name of the Prophet in poetry, as Watt would seem to think. The Prophet's name is mentioned as such in at least nine other places in poems as follows:

(1) 'Abû Ṭâlib's poem on the Quraysh leaders' pressure on him to surrender the Prophet to them.[3]

(2) 'Amr ibn al-Jamûḥ's poem on his embracing of Islam.[4]

1. She is 'Umâmah al-Muzayriyyah. The couplet is in connection with the *sariyah* of Sâlm ibn 'Umayr. See Ibn Hishâm, II, 636.

2. Watt, M.W., *op. cit.*, 117.

3. Ibn Hisham, I, 353.

4. *Ibid.*, 453.

(3) A poem which Ibn Isḥâq attributed to 'Alî ibn 'Abî Ṭâlib but which Ibn Hishâm says was composed by someone else, regarding the Banû al-Naḍîr.[1]

(4&5) Twice, once in each of the two poems by 'Abd Allah ibn al-Zib'arâ, respectively on the battle of 'Uḥud and on his embracing of Islam.[2]

(6,7,8) Thrice, once in each of the three poems of Ka'b ibn Mâlik al-Anṣâri, respectively on the death of Ḥamzah, on the battle of Khandaq and on the battle of Khaybar.[3] In the last instance he mentions both the names, Aḥmad and Muḥammad, in the poem.

(9) Ḥassân ibn Thâbit al-Anṣârî's poem on the death of Ḥârithah and Ibn Rawwâḥah.[4]

Again, it is not in poems only, but in Ibn Isḥâq's text as well, that the Prophet's name is mentioned as Aḥmad in at least two places, namely, in a report of Ḥassân ibn Thâbit which Ibn Isḥâq quotes[5] and in his own comments on the Qur'ânic passage 2:40.[6] This passage relates to the 'covenant' made by the Children of Israel. The way in which Ibn Isḥâq uses the name Aḥmad in his comments on this passage leaves no room for doubt that he adopts the name from the Qur'ânic passage 61:6 which speaks of the Israelites' knowledge about the coming of the Prophet "whose name is Aḥmad." Incidentally, this use of the name Aḥmad by Ibn Isḥâq in his text nullifies the assumption of Gutherie and Bishop, which Watt endorses and adopts,[7] that the name Aḥmad was not used by either Ibn Isḥâq or Ibn Hishâm.

Thus, by wrongly assuming that none was called Aḥmad after the Prophet till about the year 125 H. and that till that time the expression was normally taken as an adjective only Watt proceeds to interpret the Qur'ânic passage 61:6. He translates its relevant part as:" announcing the good tidings of a messenger who will come after me whose name is more worthy of praise."[8] Watt says that the standard interpretation of the words *ismuhu aḥmadu* was

1. *Ibid.*, II, 197.
2. *Ibid.*, 142, 419.
3. *Ibid.*, 158, 256 and 349.
4. *Ibid.*, 387.
5. *Ibid.*, I., 159.
6. *Ibid.*, 534.
7. *M.W.*, 1953, Vol. 43, p. 113.
8. *Ibid.* The Arabic text is: ﴿ ... ومبشراً برسول يأتي من بعدي اسمه أحمد ... ﴾

not commonly accepted by Muslims until after the first half of the secomd century.[1] In support of this statement he adduces two reasons. He says that Ibn Isḥâq does not mention Aḥmad as the Prophet's name and observes that it cannot be assumed that the historian was unaware of the name, for his contemporary Mûsâ ibn Ya'qûb al-Zâmi' (d.153-158) transmits a tradition recorded by Ibn Sa'd giving Aḥmad as the Prophet's name. "It is therefore conceivable", argues Watt, "that Ibn Isḥâq omitted a reference to the name Aḥmad not because he was ignorant, but because he disapproved of this interpretation of the Qur'ânic verse."[2] Watt's second argument is that Al-Ṭabarî (224-310 H.) in his commentary on 61:6, "though himself giving the orthodox interpretation, is unable to quote any earlier commentator as authority for it", although "he is in the habit of quoting strings of authorities for every slight matter." This means, says Watt, "that he knew of no reputable exegete who held what was in his time the standard and obvious view."[3]

Now, Watt is seriously mistaken in following Gutherie and Bishop and assuming that Ibn Isḥâq omits to refer to the Prophet's name as Aḥmad. As pointed out above,[4] Ibn Isḥâq does use the name Aḥmad and that also in interpreting a Qur'ânic passage (2:40) which reminds the Jews of their pledge and their knowledge about the coming Prophet. There is thus no room for doubt that Ibn Isḥâq used the name and related it to the prophecy about the Prophet.

As regards the argument about Al-Ṭabarî, Watt's approach is based clearly on two mutually exclusive premises. He says that Al-Ṭabarî gives the orthodox interpretation because that "was in his time the standard and obvious view"; yet, because he does not cite any authoirty, there "was no reputable exegete who had held" that view. Needless to point out that no particular interpretation could have been *standardized* and accepted as the "obvious" one if the "reputable" exegetes of the time or of the previous age had not held it or if they had held a different or contrary view. It may also be noted that Al-Ṭabarî does not cite authorities in each and every instance; he generally does so where there are more than one opinion on the point or where the text is difficult and admits of several interpretations. That he does

1. *Ibid.*
2. *Ibid.*, 113-114.
3. *Ibid.*, 113.
4. *Supra*, p. 152.

not cite any authority in the present instance means only that there was no difference of opinion about the meaning of the passage in question, neither in his own time nor previously, and that the text is so clear and unambiguous that it does not admit of any other interpretation.

Al-Ṭabarî's omission to cite any authority is in itself no proof that there was previously a different opinion on the point. In fairness to that scholar as well as in justice to his own claim Watt should have cited an earlier authority in support of his interpretation. He does not do so and attempts to prove his case only by a negative approach. But here also he is mistaken. 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abbâs (d.68H.), "the father of Ḳur'ânic exegesis",[1] in fact interpreted the expression *ismuhu Aḥmad* as "his name is Aḥmad ",[2] about two centuries before Al-Ṭabarî.

In fact the expression *ismuhu* (اسمه) "His name is" is so clear and unequivocal that there can be no other meaning for the clause. It is only Watt who for the first time has advanced the strange suggestion that the word Aḥmad is here an adjecive and that the clause should be translated: "Whose /His/ name is more worthy of praise". This translation is an affront to both the English and Arabic languages. It is a person (or his act or conduct) that is generally spoken of as "praiseworthy" or "more worthy of praise", not *his name*. Hence normally it would be said: He is praisworthy or more worthy of praise". No one would say: "His name is praiseworthy". If it is so said, it means his *name* as such is Praiseworthy", that is "He is Mr. Praiseworthy or Mr. More Praiseworthy." The statement would thus be taken as giving the person's name, though that name is an adjective *as a word*.

Apart from the question of English usage, however, Watt's translation grossly violates the recognized rules of Arabic grammar. In Arabic adjectives of comparative or superlative degrees take one of three forms only—the form of *iḍâfah*, for instance *huwa afḍalu-hum* (He is the best of them); the form of simple comparaison by the use of *min*, for instance *huwa afḍalu minhu* (He is better than he) and the form of defieniteness by prefixing *al* to the adjective, for instance , *huwa al-afḍalu* (He is the best). The

1. *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, New Edn., Leiden, 1986, p. 40.

2. *Tanwîr al-Miqbâs min Tafsîr ibn 'Abbâs*, Al-Maktabat al-Sha'biyah, n.d., p. 469. Among other prints, this work was printed at Bombay in 1280 H. (reprinted 1320), followed by the Bûlâq print at Cairo in 1290 H. (reprinted 1863, 1867 A.C.) and at Isṭânbûl in 1317 H. It has also been reprinted at the margin of Al-Suyûṭî's *Al-Durr al-Manthûr*, Al-Mataba'ah al-Azhariyyah, 1302, 1316, 1322 and 1344 H.

principle underlying all these forms is that the object with which comparison is made must be either expressed or understood from the context. In the case where *al* is used, it is generally one of superlative degree and here the object with which comparison is made may be expressed or implied. In all cases where exception to the above mentioned rules are made, the object with which comparison is made is either universally known or is too evident from the context to need any mention of it. Such is not the case in the passage under discussion. Watt's translation thus overlooks and violates the accepted rules of the language and is simply grammatically inadmissible, the more so as he puts it in the comparative degree—his"name is more worthy of praise". More in relation to what or whose name? No other previous messenger of Allah nor any historical figure bore the name "Praiseworthy". In fact Watt simply confuses the meaning of the name, Aḥmad, with the meaning of the passage. If Aḥmad in the clause was meant to be an adjective, and not a name, it would have been either prefixed with the definite article *al* or would have been followed by *min* and an object to it; or it would have been framed in the form of an *iḍâfah* adding some expression to the adjective as *muḍâf'ilayhi*.

On the basis of his untenable assumptions and wrong translation Watt proceeds to reconstruct what he calls "the course of events" as follows. He says that in order to meet "Christian criticisms of Islam some Muslims were looking for predictions of Muḥammad in the Christian scriptures" and noticed the passage Jn.XIV-XVI. Watt further says that possibly reflection on the Qu'ânic passage 61:6 "first set a convert from Christianity, with a slight knowledge of Greek, on the track of the argument about similarity of meaning" which was based "on the confusion of *parakletos* with *periklutos*." Therefore though *aḥmadu* in the Qur'ânic passage was hitherto "normally taken as an adjective", it was now taken as a name because it was a familiar pre-Islamic name and because a link would thus be established with the Christian scriptural passage, making the argument particularly convincing for the Muslims who were "more familiar with their own scriptures." And once adopted, the name soon became popular.[1]

We need not here enter into the controversy over *parakletos* and *periklutos*. It would suffice to point out the flaws in Watt's above mentionted statements. The Qur'ân makes repeated claims that the coming of a Prophet

1. *M.W.*, Vol. 43, pp. 114-115.

had been foretold in the previous scriptures and that Muḥammad (ﷺ) was that much awaited Prophet. Muslims did not therefore have to wait for Christian criticisms of Islam to appear on the scene in the second century of Islam in order to make them eager to look for those predictions in the Christian scripture. Natural inquisitiveness and the need for exegesis of the Qur'ân would have started the process of finding confirmation in that scripture. Nor did Christian criticisms of Islam delay their appearance till the second century of Islam. And since, as Watt himself states, "Muḥammad is just as good a translation of *periklutos* as Aḥmad", and since the latter word, even if taken as an adjective, equally well answers the description of the Prophet, there was no need for the Muslims to take their cue from the pre-Islamic use of the word as a name and to come forward with the novel declaration that Aḥmad also was the Prophet's name. Such an innovation would have caused a serious controversy in the ranks of the Muslims themselves, praticularly if, as Watt would have us believe, the expression in 61:6 had hitherto been "normally taken as an adjective". Watt's laboured assumption and interpretation is simply a reiteration, in another form, of the long-exploded view of Muir mentioned above, namely, that the name Aḥmad for the Prophet became popular with the Muslims in their confrontation with the Christians and Jews.

III. THE INSINUATION OF EPILEPSY AND OTHER REMARKS

With reference to the incident of *shaqq al-ṣadr* some orientalists have made the wildest insinuation that the Prophet was, since his boyhood, a lifelong patient of epilepsy or "falling disease". The insinuation originated with the Greeks and was then taken up by subsequent writers. Some of them, as Syed Ahmed Khan points out, even misread the expression *fa-'alḥiqîhi* (فألحقيه) occurring in the report as *bi-alḥaqqiyyah* (بالحقيه) and then strangely translated it as "the Hypochondriacal disease".[1] William Muir, when he composed his work, was obviously influenced by the misconception of his predecessors. Hence referring to the incident he says that it was "probably a fit of epilepsy" and writes:[2]

"If we are right in regarding the attacks which alarmed Halima as fits of a nervous or epileptic nature, they exhibit in the constitution of Mahomet the

1. Syed Ahmed Khan, *Essays on the Life of Muḥammad*, (London, 1870), reprinted Delhi, 1981, p. 388.

2. W. Muir, *The Life of Mahomet*, Vol. I., first edition, pp. 21-24. (The quotation is on pp. 23-24).

normal marks of those excited states and ecstatic swoons wich perhaps suggested to his mind the idea of inspiration, as by his followers they were undoubtedly taken to be evidence of it."

To support this theory of epilepsy Muir cites in a foot-note to his text the work of Ibn Hishâm (Ibn Isḥâq); but disregarding the fact that in Wustenfeld's edition of that work[1] as also in all other editions the material expression in the report is *'uṣîba* (أصيب), Muir reproduces it as *'umiba* (أميب), which is apparently a strange and meaningless expression. He then gives out its meaning as "had a fit".[2] If he had in fact followed a faulty manuscript or printed copy of the work, it would have been proper to refer to that. Muir did not do so. On the contrary, when Syed Ahmed Khan pointed out in 1870 this gross mistake on Muir's part,[3] the latter simply omitted the foot-note in question from the subsequent edition of his book without altering or modifying his assertion, for which the foot-note had originally been given as evidence. Thus, even though the mistake and misuse of the source were pointed out, the allegation was persitently advanced.[4]

It may be noted that in none of the reports concerning the incident of *shaqq al-ṣadr* is it mentioned that the boy Muḥammad (ﷺ) was seen unconscious or in a fit of epilepsy. Again, none of the reports relates the incident with the physical stresses and strains that sometimes attended the coming of revelation to the Prophet much later in his life. Yet Muir, following his predecessors, has done so and has made the unwarrantable observation that the "fits of a nervous or epileptic nature" were "the normal marks" in the constitution of Muḥammad (ﷺ) of "those excited states and ecstatic swoons which perhaps suggested to his mind the idea of inspiration, as by his followers they were undoubtedly taken to be evidence of it." Such a mixing up of two entirely different affairs is not at all supported by the texts and is rather indicative of two distinct attitudes. It betrays, on the one hand, an awareness of the inadequacy of the various reports about *shaqq al-ṣadr* as basis for the assumption of epilepsy. Hence a sort of supporting evidence is sought by giving a twist to the circumstances that occasionally attended the coming of revelation to the Prophet. On the other hand it betrays a confusion, or rather

1. Gottingen, 1858.
2. Muir, *op.cit.*, first edition, p. 21, n.
3. Syed Ahmad Khân, *op.cit.*, p. 386.
4. See for instance Muir, *op.cit.*, third edition, London, 1894, pp. 5-7.

an intention to create confusion, about the nature of revelation and thereby the nature of Muḥammad's (ﷺ) Prophethood. This latter attitude in fact appears to be the more fundamental in the whole approach to the subject. Hence many a subsequent orientalist, though not accepting the theory of epilepsy, has taken over the implication of Muir's above noted remarks and has attempted to explain the phenomenon of revelation (وحى) in terms of what is called Muḥammad's (ﷺ) "consciousness", that is, what he thought or "sincerely" believed to be "inspiration" but which was nonetheless not from God.[1] This point will be taken up for further discussion at a later stage of this work.[2] Here it must be pointed out, however, that Muslims do not take the so-called "excited states and ecstatic swoons" as evidence of inspiration, as Muir asserts.

The theory of epilepsy or of any such ailment cannot be sustained, neither on historical nor on rational and medical grounds. It is evident from all the available accounts that the Prophet possessed and retained till his death an uncommon physical and mental health and resourcefulness. Nor did he ever exhibit any sign of debility and degeneration of body and mind which, by the common verdict of past and present medical science, are the unavoidable effects of epilepsy or hysteria. Not that this fact is quite unknown to the protagonists of the insinuation. Muir himself notes: "It is probable that, in other respects, the constitution of Mahomet was rendered more robust".[3] Yet Muir and his followers would persist in advancing the insinuation.

Thus Margoliouth, while recognizing that some of the signs of epilepsy including degeneration of the brain power were wanting in the case of the Prophet, nonetheless echoes Muir not only in reiterating the allegation but also in relating the alleged fits of epilepsy with the process of the coming of revelation. Margoliouth even adds that the Prophet had developed the skill of "artificially" inducing the symptoms in order to "produce" revelations! He writes: "... the notion current among Christian writers[4] that he was subject to epilepsy finds curious confirmation in the notices recorded of his experiences during the process of revelation — the importance of which is not lessened by the possibility that the symptoms were often artifically induced."[5] The insinuation thus developed by Muir and Margoliouth has

1. *Infra*, Chap. XX, sec. I.
2. *Infra*, Chap. XX, secs.II & III.
3. Muir, *op.cit*, Vol. I., 1st edition, p. 24; third edition, p. 7.
4. Here Margoliouth cites Nöldeke, *Gesch. d. Korans*, 18.
5. Margoliouth, *Mohammed and the rise of Islam*, third edition, London, 1905, pp. 45-46.

been reiterated by many a subsequent writer. Mention may be made particulary of Richard Bell who, while giving his support to the allegation, lists all the leading orientalists who have made it and also relates it mainly to the process of revelation.[1] As Muir is the main propagator of the calumny in modern times and as the others have merely followed his suit without adding any valid reason for the assumption, no separate analysis of their views is called for.

Of the other incident of the Prophet's childhood special attention is paid by the orientalists to his meeting with Baḥîra while journeying to Syria along with his uncle because it shows in a way the Prophet's contact early in his life with a Christian monk and thus it tends to support their theory that he had acquired a previous knowledge of Christianity in various ways and that he made use of that knowledge when he gave himself out as a Prophet. They would even inflate this reported meeting with Baḥîra into several sessions of tuition and learning in the doctrines and scriptures of Christianity, though in none of its forms the report gives the impression of anything more than a very brief meeting and an incidental discussion mainly on the topic of the scriptural prophecy about the coming of the Messenger.

The quesuion of the Prophet's having allegedly borrowed his information from the Christian and Jewish sources will be dealt with at a later stage in this work.[2] Here it may only be pointed out that the orientalists's use of this incident of the meeting with Baḥîra is defective in two main respects. In the first place, they accept only a part of the report relating to the incident and reject the other part because that part goes against their point of view. The main theme of the report, indeed the whole rationale of Baḥîra's having entertained the Quraysh party, his having talked to the boy Muḥammad (ﷺ) and his having asked 'Abû Ṭâlib to take the boy back home was his (Baḥîra's) knowledge of the scriptural forecasts about the coming of a Prophet and his recognition of the "signs" of that Prophet in the boy. An acceptance of the report as a whole would imply an acknowledgement not only of the existence of such forecasts in the Christian scripture but also of the fact that knowledge of such forecasts was prevalent among the Christian priestly circle in the then Arab world. Yet, the orientalists would not concede

1. R. Bell. *Introduction to the Qur'an*, Edinburgh University Press, 1953, p. 30 ff.
2. *Infra*, chapter XI.

even such an awareness and knowledge on the part of Baḥîra and his like. Muir would even attempt to explain away this fact, as noted earlier, by arbitrarily assuming mistake or forgery on the part of some designing monk! They would thus ignore or skip over the main part and essence of the story and would instead concentrate on an incidental aspect, namely, Baḥîra's conversation with the Prophet as a boy, and would build upon it the theory of the latter's contact with and acquirement of Christian knowledge.

Secondly, as in the case of the report concerning *shaqq al-ṣadr*, so in this case also, the orientalists, particularly Muir, make use of the report although they entertain serious doubts about its genuineness. Thus Muir, in an extensive footnote to his text in the first edition, castigates the report regarding Baḥîra as fabulous and full of "so many absurdities"[1]. But then, perhaps realizing that what he wrote in the footnote militated against his assumptions in the text, omits the footnote from the subsequent edition of his work without, of course, altering the text.

Muir even conjures up this journey as a full-fledged study tour or exploratory expedition on the Prophet's part. Thus, projecting the impression an educated adult traveller would get, Muir imagines the Prophet's having noticed all the historical and archaeological sites in that part of the Arab world and states:[2]

"The expedition... afforded to the young Mahomet opportunities of observation, which were not lost upon him. He passed near to Petra, Jerash, Ammon, and other ruinous sites of former mercantile grandeur; and the sight, no doubt deeply impressed upon his reflective mind the instability of earthly greatness... On this journey too he passed through several Jewish setlements, and came in contact with the national profession of Christianity in Syria... However fallen and materialized may have been the Christianity of that day in Syria, it must have struck the thoughtful observer in favourable and wonderful contrast with the gross and unspiritual idolatry of Mecca."

The above is undoubtedly an enjoyable literary piece, but hardly a sober and credible account of what actually transpired. We would rather be inclined to think that as it was a journey made by a tarde caravan over a considerably long and not too hospitable land route, the party must have care-

1. Muir, *op.cit.*, 1st edn., 35-36.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 33-34 (3rd edition, pp. 10-11).

fully avoided making excursions to such commercially unprofitable sites as deserted habitations, ruined townships or sombre church assemblages.

CHAPTER VII
ADOLESCENCE AND YOUTH

I: GLIMPSES OF HIS ACTIVITIES

Muḥammad (ﷺ) grew up under the care and affection of his uncle 'Abû Ṭâlib and continued to live as a member of his household till the age of twenty-five. Like the other children of the family, especially his cousins, he naturally took part in its affairs and activities. The most important occupations of the Makkan society at that time were trade and tending of sheep, goats and camels. That Muḥammad (ﷺ) in his early life used to tend sheep in the valleys of Makka is known from his own statements; for, even when undisputed leader of his people he was not ashamed of speaking about his modest position in early life. Thus a tradition reported by 'Abû Hurayrah says that once the Prophet remarked that there was no Prophet who had not tended sheep, and when asked whether he himself had done so he replied that he had.[1] Several other traditions, narrated by different Companions of the Prophet state to the same effect, some of them specifically mentioning Ajyâd as one of the places in Makka where he used to tend sheep.[2] It is also stated that while shepherding he sometimes used to pluck the fruits of *'arâk*, a kind of wild plant.[3]

Whether he tended sheep for others in order to earn money is not clear. The question revolves mainly round the interpretation of the tradition which says that he used to tend sheep "for the people of Makka at (or for) *qarârîṭ*."[4] Some have taken the expression *qarârîṭ* as the name of a place; but since no place in or near Makka is known by that name, others have taken it to be the plural of *qîrâṭ* a denomination of money. The difficulty is not fully resolved, however, by this interpretation; for no coin by the name *qîrâṭ* was in circulation in Arabia at that time.[5]

The tending of sheep in his adolescence undoubtedly made Muḥammad

1. *Bukhârî*, no. 2262; *Ibn Mâjah*, no. 2149; *Muwaṭṭa'*, K54 / B6/ H18; Ibn Sa'd, I, 125.

2. Ibn Sa'd, I, 126.

3. *Bukhârî*, no. 3453; *Muslim*, no. 2050; *Musnad*, III, p. 326; Ibn Sa'd, I, 125-126.

4. *Bukhârî*, 2262; *Ibn Mâjah*, no. 2149. It may be noted that the material part of the text differs in these two sources. In the former it is: (كنت أرعاها على قراريط لأهل مكة) ; and in the latter it is: (كنت أرعاها لأهل مكة بالقراريط).

5. See for discussion *Al-Ḥalabî*, I, 205-206.

(ﷺ) well acquainted with the desert life as well as with the urban environment in which he grew up. The experience stood him in good stead when the time came for his mission and struggle. It is also not unlikely that the vast expanses of nature, the seemingly endless deserts, the bare and steep mountains relieved by deep vales and other solitary scenes in which he moved about, and the clear blue sky appearing like a big dome and studded with stars at dusk must have made deep impressions upon his mind, for he was thoughtful, reserved, extremely intelligent and remarkably discerning since his early life.

Although taking part in the work and affairs of the family like the others, he was quite unlike his compeers in character, temperament and deportment. It is on record that though living amidst an absorbing idolatry and a society immersed in superstitions and bedevilled by the vices commonly associated with an unbridled indulgence in wine and women, he steered his life clear of all the blemishes and abominable acts. Al-Ṭabarî reproduces a report on the authority of Ibn Isḥâq which says that while tending sheep with other boys the Prophet twice thought of enjoying the night-life of Makka but that on both occasions he was saved from the pitfall by divine intervention in that he was overtaken by sleep before he could even reach the place.[1] Ibn Kathîr rightly points out that this is a very strange and unusual report and says that the reporter has probably mixed up his own affair with that of the Prophet.[2]

II. ABSTINENCE FROM POLYTHEISTIC PRACTICES

Since his boyhood the Prophet developed a strong abhorrence of the polytheistic rites and practices of his people and did never participate in any polytheistic worship or festival. It is reported by 'Umm Hânî, the family maid, that once 'Abû Ṭâlib became rather angry with the boy Muḥammad (ﷺ) for his determined refusal to attend, inspite of repeated askings, an annual festival in honour of an idol.[3] Another report given by 'Umm al-Mu'minîn 'Â'ishah says that she heard the Prophet saying: "I had never tasted anything sacrificed on the altar of an idol even before Allah honoured me with His message."[4] Another tradition narrated by 'Abd Allah ibn 'Umar

1. Al-Ṭabarî, *Târîkh*, II, 279 (1126-1127).

2. Ibn Kathîr, *Al-Bidâyah* etc., I-II, 227-278. See also Ibn al-Athîr *Al-Kâmil* etc., I, Beirut, 1987, p. 567.

3. Ibn Sa'd, I., 158.

4. *Al-Ḥalabî*, I, 201.

states that long before the commencement of the mission a meat preparation was once presented before the Prophet, but he refused to partake of it saying that he did not eat of what was sacrificed on altars.[1] A yet another tradition narrated by Zayd ibn Ḥârithah states that the Prophet, even before the receipt of revelation, did not touch the idols placed between Al-Ṣafâ and Al-Marwah, as the Quraysh used to do, while making runs between those points or making circumambulation round the Ka'ba.[2] Again, a tradition reported by 'Alî ibn 'Abî Ṭâlib states: "Once the Prophet was asked: 'Have you ever worshipped an idol?' He replied: 'No'. They asked: 'Have you ever drunk wine?' He replied: 'No; for I knew what they used to do was unbelief, though I was not then aware of the *kitâb* nor of *îmân*."[3]

Indeed, lack of a knowledge of the *kitâb* (Qur'ân) and of the details of *îmân* might be described as his religious state prior to his call to Prophethood. This is what is referred to in the Qur'ânic passage 42:52 which states: "You had not been aware of the book, nor of *îmân*." ﴿... ما كنت تدرى ما الكتـب ولا الإيمان...﴾ The same sense is conveyed in a way by the passage 6:161 which runs: "Say, verily my Lord has guided me to the straight path, the upright *dîn*, the true way of 'Ibrâhîm."

﴿قل إننى هدىنى ربى إلى صرط مستقيم دينا قيما ملة إبراهيم حنيفا...﴾

It is with reference to these two passages that the passage 93:7 should be understood. It reads: "And did He not find you away from the path and then guided you?" ﴿ووجدك ضالا فهدى﴾. This passage is indeed the earliest of the three in the order of revelation. It refers to the great mental stress and tension, the spiritual yearning and the consequent anxiety that preceded his receipt of the revelation; as it also indicates the great sense of relief and gratitude which he felt on his attainment of the new enlightenment. None of the three passages could be construed to suggest that prior to his call the Prophet had been astray (*ḍâll*) in the sense of having been engrossed in idolatry. It is worth remembering in this connection that the word *ḍâll*, like many other expressions in the Qur'ân, as elsewhere, has different connotations in different contexts.[4] Apart from abstinence from idolatrous practices

1. *Bukhârî*, no. 3826. See *infra*, Ch. VIII, sec. IV, for further discussion.
2. Al-Ṭabarânî, *Majma'* etc., Vol. 9, p. 418.
3. *Al-Ḥalabî*, I, 204.
4. Three different forms of the word occur in a total of 14 places in the Qur'ân. They are: 1:7; 2:198; 3:90; 6:67; 15:26; 23:106; 26:20; 26:86; 37:69; 56:51; 56:92; 68:26; 83:32 and 93:7. The difference in meanings and implications may be seen by consulting any standard =

the Prophet, like the others of the Quraysh people, used to observe the Abrahamic rites of *ḥajj, 'umrah* and circumambulation of the Ka'ba. Also, like them, he used to keep fasts during the early days of the month of *Muḥarram*, particularly on the *'âshûrâ'* day.[1]

Since his boyhood the Prophet had a keen sense of modesty and propriety. Ibn Isḥâq records an incident in the words of the Prophet himself. "I found myself", he says, "among Quraysh boys carrying stones such as boys play with. We had all uncovered ourselves, each taking his shirt off and putting it round his neck as he carried the stones. I was going to and fro in the same way, when an unseen figure slapped me most painfully saying: 'Put your shirt on'. So I took it and put it on and then began to carry the stones upon my neck, wearing my shirt alone among my fellows."[2] A similar incident is recorded also in connection with the rebuilding of the Ka'ba.[3] Hence Suhaylî is inclined to think that the incident happened to the Prophet more than once.[4] Be that as it may, the report is reminiscent of the fact that the Prophet, even during his boyhood, abstained from exposing his person in the ordinary course of his activities.

As he grew up he was distinguished by his exemplary character, his sincerity, honesty, integrity, truthfulness and trustworthiness. Ibn Isḥâq pithily describes this fact in the following expressive passage:[5]

"Thus the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings of Allah be on him, grew up, Allah taking care of him, protecting him and keeping him away of the filth of heathenism because He intended to honour him and make him His Messenger, until he grew into manhood and turned out to be the best of his people in manliness, the noblest of them in character, the most respectable in lineage, the best of them as a neighbour, the greatest of them in intelligence, the most truthful, the most reliable and the farthest removed from any debasing practices and conduct, through loftiness and nobility, so that he became known as 'The Trustworthy' because of the good qualities which Allah combined in him."

= commentary on these passages. For instance at 2:198 the word is clearly used in a very narrow sense of those who skipped over the rite at Muzdalifa during pilgrimage. Similarly at 15:56 it is used in the sense of one who has not full confidence in God's mercy and is rather a pessimist. Again, at 68:26, it is used in the ordinary sense of one who is mistaken.

1. See for instance *Bukhari*, no. 2002. See also nos. 2001, 1892.
2. Ibn Hishâm, I, 183; *Al-Ḥalabî*, I. 199.
3. *Bukhârî*, no. 3829.
4. Suhaylî, I, 208-209.
5. Ibn Hishâm, I, 183.

III. THE *FIJÂR* WARS

Two notable events during the Prophet's early youth were the *Fijâr* or Sacrilegious Wars and the conclusion of the *Ḥilf al-Fuḍûl* or the Pious Pact.

The *Fijâr* wars took place when the Prophet was roughly between fourteen and twenty years of age. There were in fact a series of some four consecutive wars extending over a period of not less than five years. These were called *Fijâr* or sacrilegious wars because they were started or fought in the sacred month of Dhû al-Qa'dah when a breach of the peace and carrying out of inter-tribal hostilities was traditionally considered a sacrilegious act. The wars originated at the famous 'Ukâẓ fair which used to be held annually for the first three weeks of Dhû al-Qa'dah at a place between Ṭâ'if and Nakhla. They were also related in a large measure to tribal ego and a false sense of honour and dignity in protecting and supporting a member or ally of a tribe, be he in the right or wrong. At 'Ukâẓ not only traders and merchants thronged from all parts of the peninsula with their merchandize and wares, but also poets, musicians, magicians, dancers and other entertainers came to exhibit and make money out of their respective skills. One of the main cultural features of the fair was a sort of national competition among the poets of the various tribes who recited their respective compositions, each seeking to establish his own as well as his tribe's prestige and superiority over the others. Naturally, tribal spirit and excitement ran high on such occasions and these often led to a good deal of quarrels, conflicts and bloodshed.

The first *Fijâr* war was occasioned by the boasting at that fair of a person of one tribe who claimed himself to be the most respected individual among all the Arabs and then his being challenged in that claim and struck with a sword by an equally headstrong person of another tribe. The second and the third wars broke out, respectively, over the insulting of a woman of one tribe by a man of another tribe and over the question of settling the debt owed by a person of one tribe to a person of another tribe. The fourth, i.e., the last war broke out over a more serious affair. Nu'mân ibn Mundhir, king of Ḥîra, wanted to send his trade caravan to the 'Ukâẓ fair and looked for a suitable guarantor (*kafîl*) for that purpose. Barrâḍ ibn Qays of Banû Kinânanh of Makka and 'Urwah ibn 'Utbah of Banû Hawâzin of Ṭâ'if contested for getting the assignment which doubtless carried a commission for the guarantor. Nu'mân ultimately selected 'Urwah as the guarantor. Stung at this dis-

comfiture Barrâḍ waylaid 'Urwah and killed him.[1] In the fightings that consequently broke out over this affair the Quraysh and Kinânah tribes along with their allies were ranged against the Hawâzin and Qays tribes and their allies. The war continued for four years, with long intermissions, the fightings taking place mainly at the time of the fair, and victory alternating between the contending sides. Ultimately the hostilities were brought to an end by an agreement which provided that the side of whom a greater number of people had been killed in the course of the fightings should get compensation for the excess number of their dead people.

According to Ibn Isḥâq the Prophet was twenty years of age when the last *Fijâr* war took place.[2] Ibn Hishâm, however, puts the age at 14 or 15 and further says that on one of the "days" of the war the Prophet was taken by his uncles to the battlefield. He further records a report which represents the Prophet as saying: "I used to return to them (my uncles) the arrows thrown at them by their enemies."[3]

Ibn Hishâm dose not mention any authority for this particlular saying of the Prophet. Taking Ibn Hishâm's statement as it is, the following points emerge from it. (a) It appears that the Prophet did not himself go to the battlefield but his uncles "took" him there with them. (b) This fact of his uncles' *taking* him there shows that he was hardly a young man to act independently or to actively participate in the fightings. (c) His role there was in the nature of a camp-follower, being limited to the task of collecting and returning to his uncles the arrows thrown at them by their enemies (obviously for their reuse by his uncles).

Al-Wâqidî, a senior contemporary of Ibn Hishâm, gives a version of this incident which appears to be a combination of the statements of Ibn Isḥâq and Ibn Hishâm. Thus, obviously following Ibn Isḥâq, Al-Wâqidî states that the Prophet was 20 years old at the time and then, like Ibn Hishâm, quotes the Prophet as saying: "I was present at it (i.e. the *Fijâr* war) with my uncles and threw arrows in it. I wish I had not done so."[4]

1. See for details Muḥammad ibn Ḥabîb al-Baghdâdî (d. 245 / 859), *Kitâb al-Munammiq Fî Akhbâr Quraysh* (ed. Khurshid Aḥmad Fâriq), Beirut, 'Âlam al-Kutub, 1405 h / 1985, pp. 160-185. See also Ibn Hishâm, I., 184-185.

2. *Ibid.*, 186.

3. *Ibid.*

4. Ibn Sa'd, I, 128. The Arabic text runs as follows:

(قد حضرته مع عمومتي ورميت فيه باسهم وما أحب أني لم أكن فعلت)

Like Ibn Hishâm, again, Al-Wâqidî does not cite any authority for this report. This omission on his part is all the more striking in view of the fact that in the same place and dealing with the same topic he gives the *isnâd* in full for the statement of Ḥakîm ibn Ḥizâm who says that he saw the Prophet being present at the *Fijâr* War.[1] Significantly enough, this statement of Ḥizâm does not make any mention of the Prophet's either collecting or throwing arrows. In view of these discrepancies in the reports it is difficult to be sure about the exact nature of the Prophet's role in the battle. Clearly, the two different versions of the Prophet's reported saying given by Ibn Hishâm and Al-Wâqidî cannot both be at the same time an accurate report of what he said, if he did at all, on the subject.

IV. THE *ḤILF AL-FUḌÛL*

Closely following the termination of the *Fijâr* Wars was concluded a pact known as *Ḥilf al-Fuḍûl*. It was not a direct sequel to those wars but it evidently grew out of that good sense which had brought it to an end and which recognized the baneful effects of the lack of security and lawlessness that generally prevailed in the land. The immediate occasion for the conclusion of the pact was that Al-'Âṣ ibn Wâ'il of Banû Sahm of Makka obtained goods from a visitsing Yamanî (Zibaydî) trader but did not pay him the value for them. The latter appealed to the *Aḥlâf*, a group formed earlier by Banû 'Abd al-Dâr, Banû Makhzûm, Banû Jumaḥ, Banû Sahm and Banû 'Adiyy ibn Ka'b,[2] obviously because Al-'Âṣ ibn Wâ'il belonged to that group. The *Aḥlâf* however, declined to intervene in the matter. Hence the aggrieved Yamanî took his case before the general body of the Quraysh who used to assemble at the Ka'ba compound. There his cause was taken up by Zubayr ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, an uncle of the Prophet (full brother of 'Abd Allah), at whose instance the leaders of Banû Hâshim, Banû al-Muṭṭalib, Banû Zuhrah, Banû Asad and Banû Taym met at the house of 'Abd Allah ibn Jud'ân of the last mentioned clan and one of the richest, if not the richest man of the city. The latter offered a grand feast on the occasion. There the leaders and those of their followers who were present there entered into a pact solemnly undertaking:

(a) to protect and support the oppressed;

(b) to restore to the rightful owner any property of which he was wrongly

1. *Ibid*.
2. See *Supra*, pp. 38-39.

deprived or dispossessed; and

(c) to oppose injustice and to get justice done to the aggrieved party,

irrespective of tribe and clan affiliations of the parties involved, or of their social position, or of their domicile.[1]

Because of this noble object of the pact it came to be known as *Ḥilf al-Fuḍûl* or "Pact of the Pious". Another explanation given for the name is that it was so called because it aimed at taking from a person such property as he held in excess (i.e. *fuḍûl*) of his rightful claim to it. A third view is that it was so called because three of those who were active behind its formation had each *Faḍl* for his name, (i.e. Al-Faḍl ibn Fuḍâlah, Al-Faḍl ibn Wadâ'ah and Al-Faḍl ibn al-Ḥârith), *fuḍûl* being the plural of *faḍl*. Yet another explanation would have us believe that it was so called because those who did not like its formation scornfully remarked that the confederates had bothered themselves with an unnecessary (*fuḍûl*) affair.[2]

It must be observed that the three last mentioned explanations are not in accord with the context in which the pact came into being. That it was a league against injustice and was properly so called is clear not only from the background against which it was formed but also from its subsequent performances. The story of three *Faḍls* being active in bringing it into existence is not supported by the well-known facts that Zubayr ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib and 'Abd Allah ibn Jud'ân were the moving spirits behind its formation. Similarly the explanation of the name with reference to the "excess" or wrongful possession only confirms the real object of the pact. Again the casual and rueful remark of an ill-disposed group could not have bestowed upon the pact a name by which it attained celebrity in the annals of the people.

That there was a group of clans who did not like its formation nor did apparently subscribe to its objectives is evident not only from the facts connected with the formation of the *Ḥilf* but also from Ibn Isḥâq's description of it immediately after his treatment of the differences that developed in the ranks of the Quraysh after Quṣayy's death and the consequent division of the clans into two distinct groups, the *Aḥlâf* and the *Muṭayyabûn*,[3] and not after

1. Al-Baghdâdî, *Kitâb al-Munammiq etc., op.cit.*, pp. 186-188. See also Al-Mas'ûdî, *Murûj etc.*, II, 276-277; Ibn Hishâm, I, 133-135; Suhaylî, I, 155-156; Ibn al-Athîr, *Al-Kâmil etc.*, I, 570-571; Ibn Kathir, *Al-Bidâyah etc.*, I-II, (II), 290-293; *Al-Ḥalabi*, I, 211-215.

2. *Ibid.*, 214.

3. See *Supra*, pp. 38-39.

his description of the Prophet's early life, though from the facts stated by him elsewhere and from the other sources it is clear that the *Ḥilf* came into being shortly after the conclusion of the *Fijâr* War. The Prophet himself indicates that it was a pact mainly of the *Muṭayyabûn* group of clans.[1] This is also a generally acknowledged fact.[2]

The formation of *Ḥilf al-Fuḍûl* was undoubtedly a significant development in that the confederate clans, whatever their other considerations, raised themselves above mere clan spirit and local considerations and came forward to live and act up to a higher principle for the common good. More significant is the fact that the Prophet, who was then just stepping into manhood, was present at the conference at 'Abd Allah ibn Jud'ân's house and participated in the formation of the league.[3] It is his first recorded participation in a public act and he remembered it as an important event in his life. He is reported to have remarked, much later in his life and after the establishment of Islam, that even then if any oppressed person sought his help in the name of the *Ḥilf* he would gladly extend it.[4] It is mainly with reference to it that he also said that though there was no further need for any pact (*ḥilf*) in Islam, whatever had been concluded before the coming of Islam was confirmed and strengthened by it.[5]

The *Ḥilf* was successful in its immediate objective. After concluding the pact the leaders went to Al-'Âṣ ibn Wâ'il and made him return the goods to the Yamanî merchant. This fact shows that the group proved to be a powerful factor in the social life of the city and could assert itself against the *Aḥlâf* clans. It is also on record that shortly afterwards a man of Banû Khath'am came to Makka on *ḥajj* or *'umrah* bringing with him his beautiful daughter. An inhabitant of Makka named Nubayh ibn al-Ḥajjâj forcibly took away the girl for an evil purpose. The poor father cried at the Ka'ba compound invoking help of the *Ḥilf al-Fuḍûl*. Immediately the leaders of the confederate clans came forward well-armed and forced the miscreant to

1. *Musnad*, I, 190.

2. *Al-Ḥalabî*, I, 214.

3. Ibn Hishâm, I, 134; *Musnad*, I, 190, 193.

4. Ibn Hishâm, I, 134; Suhaylî, I, 155-156, 158.

5. See *Musnad*, I, 190, 193; II, 180, 207, 212-213, 215; III, 281; IV, 83; V, 61; *'Abû Dâ'ud*, no. 2909; *Dârimî*, II, p. 243; *Ṭayâlisî*, no. 1084.

(كل حلف كان في الجاهلية لم يزده الإسلام إلا شدة أو حدة)

restore the girl to her father.[1] Indeed the *Ḥilf* continued to be a living force after the establishment of Islam. As late as the time of *Khalîfah* Mu'âwiyyah his governor of Madina, Al-Walîd ibn 'Utbah, was obliged to pay what he owed to Al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Alî when he threatened to invoke the *Ḥilf* for obtaining his right and when 'Abd Allah ibn al-Jubayr announced his support for Al-Ḥusayn.[2]

V: SECOND JOURNEY TO SYRIA AND MARRIAGE WITH KHADÎJAH

The formation of the *Ḥilf al-Faḍûl* indeed marks the Prophet's emergence into public life. He was by then well known for his honesty, integrity, truthfulness, reliability and high moral character so that he was generally called *Al-'Amîn* or "The Trustworthy". Such reputation and public recognition of his character he must have acquired by his day-to-day dealings with his people, especially by his discharge of the trusts and responsibilities that must have been reposed in him from time to time. We have, however, no detailed information about such activities on his part. All that the sources reveal are some indirect and vague allusions to some trading activities on his part in Makka.[3]

It is particularly on record, however, that he made a second journey to Syria, when about twenty-five years of age, leading Khadîjah's trade caravan to that land. Historians have been careful to note this event in some detail obviously because it proved to be a turning point in his life. Yet this very commercial assignment to him presupposes that he had by then some acknowledged experience in such transactions; for, wise and well-experienced as Khadîjah was by all accounts in trade and commerce, she just would not have staked her capital and caravan upon a young man, however honest and just, if she had not been convinced of his abilities and suitability in this respect. Nonetheless it is certain that whatever trading activities he might have been engaged in at Makkah, he had not previously led any other trade caravan to a foreign land. If he had done so, that fact would surely have been referred to by the chroniclers and traditionists at least in connection with this trading mission on behalf of Khadîjah.

Khadîjah was the daughter of Khuwaylid, son of Asad, son of 'Abd al-'Uzzâ, son of Quṣayy, son of Kilâb, son of Murrah. Her ancestry thus met

1. *Al-Ḥalabî*, I, 221-222.
2. Ibn Hishâm, I, 134-135.
3. *Al-'Iṣâbah*, IV, pp. 111-112; V, p. 60; *Al-Mustadrak*, III, p. 637.

with that of the Prophet in Quṣayy. At the time she was about forty years of age. She had been previously married successively to two persons, both of whom had died leaving a couple of children for her. She still retained her health, youth and beauty. Her real beauty lay, however, in her character and conduct. She lived all through a pure and chaste life, singularly free from all the blemishes of her city and society. For that reason every person, friend and foe, high and low, used to refer to her respectfully as *Al-Ṭâhirah*, "The pure Lady". To this sterling quality she added a rare wisdom, a penetrating understanding of men and of affairs and a practical business acumen. She also owned a considerable fortune, partly inherited but mainly multiplied by skilful management of her business. It is stated that her business wares and caravan almost equalled, if not surpassed, those of all the other Quraysh traders of Makka at that time. Naturally she was the most respected and no less coveted lady of the city.

It is stated by Ibn Isḥâq that Khadîjah, hearing of the character and capabilities of Muḥammad (ﷺ) contacted him through his uncle, 'Abû Ṭâlib, and requested him to lead her trade caravan to Syria, offering him double the remuneration she used to pay others.[1] Muḥammad (ﷺ), in consultation with his uncle and well-wisher 'Abû Ṭâlib, accepted this offer and led her caravan to Syria, accompanied as an assistant by Maysara, a servant of Khadîjah's.

As in the case with his first travel to Syria in company with his uncle, so also in connection with this second travel, the historians have narrated the story of another monk, Nestorius, who lived about the same place where Baḥîra did some twelve or fourteen years before and who is said to have similarly recognized in Muḥammad (ﷺ) the signs of the future Prophet and spoken to him as well as to Maysara to the same effect.[2] It is also stated that Maysara himself noticed two angels (according to another version of the report, clouds) shading Muḥammad (ﷺ) from the sun in the course of his return journey. The authenticity of these reports is of course arguable. Be that as it may, the trading expedition proved unexpectedly successful. The Prophet not only sold Khadîjah's wares at a considerable profit but also obtained with the proceeds goods that on return to Makka fetched her almost double in profit.

1. Ibn Hishâm, I, 188.

2. *Ibid.* Also Ibn Sa'd, I, 130; Ibn al-'Athîr, *Al-Kâmil etc.*, I., 569; Al-Ṭabarî, *Târikh*, II, 280 (1 / 1128); Ibn Kathîr, *Al-Bidâyah etc.*, II, 294.

The contact thus established between Muḥammad (ﷺ) and Khadîjah ultimately led to their marriage. It is not clear whether he carried on any further trade operations on her behalf, but all the accounts state that she gradually became captivated by his personality, character and qualities and that it was she who took the initiative in making the proposal for marriage although she had previously turned down the proposals of several well-to-do Quraysh individuals. She employed her trusted companion and friend Nafîsah bint Munîyah to sound Muḥammad (ﷺ) on the subject.[1] She says that when after some preliminary words she raised the question of marriage he expressed his financial insufficiency for marriage at that stage of his life and that when she disclosed her exact mission and the identity of her employer and the proposed bride the Prophet was taken by surprise and remarked: "How could that be for me?" "Leave that to me", Nafîsah answered, whereupon the Prophet signified his consent for her to proceed with the matter. Nafîsah returned to Khadîjah with all satisfaction and communicated to her the results of her mission.[2] Thereafter further negotiations took place between the two sides ending in their marriage on the appointed day. It is stated that the Prophet's uncle, 'Abû Ṭâlib or Ḥamzah, acted as guardian for him on the occasion, while Khadîjah's uncle, 'Amr ibn Asad, acted as guardian on her behalf. She was at that time forty years old, while Muḥammad (ﷺ) was twenty-five years only.[3]

The marriage turned out to be singularly happy and successful. It had continued for twenty-five years when Khadîjah died. During this long period of a quarter of a century, which coincided with the prime of his youth, the Prophet did not take any other wife. All his children except one (Ibrâhîm) were born of Khadîjah. They were two sons, Al-Qâsim and Al-Ṭâhir ('Abd Allah), and four daughters, Zaynab, Ruqayyah, Umm Kulthûm and Fâṭimah. All the sons, including Ibrâhîm who was born of Mâriah at a subsequent date, died in their infancy; while the daughters lived long, embraced Islam and migrated to Madina. Two of the daughters were at first betrothed respectively to two sons of 'Abu Lahab; but their marriages did not go through

1. Ibn Sa'd, I, 131.
2. *Ibid.* Nafîsah's statement runs as follows:

(فأرسلتني دسيسا إلى محمد بعد أن رجع في عيرها من الشام، فقلت : يا محمد ما يمنعك أن تزوج؟ فقال ما بيدي ما أتزوج به، قلت : فإن كفيت ذلك ودعيت إلى الجمال والمال والشرف والكفاءة ألا تجيب؟ قال فمن هي؟ قلت : خديجة : فقال : وكيف لي بذلك؟ قالت قلت : علي، قال : فأنا أفعل، فذهبت فأخبرتها)

3. *Ibid.*

because of the ill-feelings and opposition of the latter's wife, Umm Jamîl ('Abû Sufyân's sister). Ultimately Zaynab was married to 'Abû al-'Âṣ ibn al-Rabî' (ibn 'Abd al-'Uzzâ ibn 'Abd Shams ibn 'Abd Manâf).[1] Ruqaiyyah and 'Umm Kulthûm were successively married to 'Uthmân ibn 'Affân, one after the death of the other; while Fâṭimah was married to 'Alî ibn 'Abî Ṭâlib.

The marriage with Khadîjah relieved Muḥammad (ﷺ) of his uneasy financial circumstances. Henceforth he left the household of his uncle 'Abû Ṭâlib and started living independently with Khadîjah. She placed all her wealth and resources at his command. This undoubtedly afforded him a comparatively easy and contented life. This favourable change in his circumstances is clearly alluded to in the Qur'ân, 93:8, "Did He not find thee impoverished and then enriched thee?" Historians are, however, completely silent about his activities for about ten years following his marriage with Khadîjah. We get only an indirect glimpse of what he notably did during this period from the famous report about Khadîjah's immediate reaction and remark when the Prophet, on receipt of the first revelation, came to her in a state of utter bewilderment and fear. She comforted him by saying that Allah could not mean any harm to him because "you always speak the truth, entertain guests, look after the relatives, help and assist the poor and persons in distress" etc.[2] Obviously these were the facts of his day-to-day life and character so that they immediately occurred to her as grounds for assurance and consolation for herself as well as her noble husband at that momentous juncture of their life. There could be no doubt that the Prophet had turned his newly acquired easy circumstances to good account and had distinguished himslef by the good deeds referred to by Khadîjah.

We have information of at least two specific acts of his during the first ten years of his married life that may clearly be classified with the category of benevolent activities mentioned by Khadîjah. The one was his adoption of 'Alî, son of 'Abû Ṭâlib. It is stated that because of a large family and consequent upon a year of drought 'Abû Ṭâlib was passing through a hard time. At this the Prophet approached his uncle 'Abbâs, who was better off, and suggested to him that they both should do something to relieve 'Abû Ṭâlib. Hence both of them went to the latter and persuaded him to allow them to

1. *Al-'Iṣâbah*, IV, p. 121. 'Abû al'Âṣ's mother was Hâlah, a sister of Khadîjah. Hence he was her nephew and Zaynab's cousin.

2. See *Infra*, Ch. XVI, sec.I.

maintain some of his sons. The old man agreed. Thereupon the Prophet took 'Alî, while 'Abbâs took Ja'far. The Prophet brought up 'Alî as his son. He was one of the very first few to embrace Islam and, as indicated above, to him the Prophet subsequently gave his youngest daughter Fâṭimah in marriage.

The other act was the adoption of Zayd ibn Ḥârithah. He was captured as a boy by the enemies of his family or by banditti and was sold by them as a slave at the famous 'Ukâẓ fair where Khadîjah's nephew Ḥakîm ibn Ḥizâm bought him for her at 400 dirhams. On her marriage with the Prophet she presented him the boy servant. The Prophet freed him from all bondage of servitude and treated him with so much fatherly love and affection that people started referring to him as Zayd ibn Muḥammad. Subsequently Zayd's father Ḥârithah and uncle Ka'b, on getting his trace, came to the Prophet and asked his favour for returning their son to them in lieu of the bond money. The Prophet declined the money but allowed complete freedom for Zayd either to stay with him or to return to his family with his father and uncle. Zayd was by that time so impressed by the treatment he had received from the Prophet that he preferred staying with the latter. As a token of further assurance to Zayd's father and uncle the Prophet then went to the Ka'ba compound and publicly announced his adoption of Zayd as a son.[1] For the remainder of his life Zayd stayed with the Prophet and was one of the first few to believe in his Prophethood and to embrace Islam.

VI: RECONSTRUCTION OF THE KA'BA AND THE PROPHET'S ARBITRATION

When about thirty-five years of age the Prophet's character and personality received national confirmation through an event which the historians have understandably taken care to record in some detail. It was the reconstruction of the Ka'ba. Its walls had shown signs of cracks due to flooding by heavy rains. It had also hitherto no roof over it and a thief had lately made away with some treasures kept in it. Hence the Quraysh leaders decided to raise the plinth of the structure, to rebuild its walls to a greater height and to put a roof over them. The plans were facilitated by the availability of a suitable craftsman, an Egyptian copt, at Makka at that time; and also by the wrecking of a Greek ship off the coast of Jedda and the depositing of its timbers on the shore by winds and waves. These timbers were

1. *Al-'Iṣâbah*, I, no. 2889 (p. 563). The relationship by adoption was abolished in Islam.

purchased by the Quraysh leaders for the purpose of making the roof.[1] An advisory role in the plans was played by 'Abû Wahb ibn 'Amr of Banû Makhzûm, a maternal uncle of the Prophet's father 'Abd Allah.[2] The Quraysh clans decided all to share the work of rebuilding the Ka'ba.

The task of reconstruction involved, however, first the demolition of the existing walls; and this task initially occasioned a good deal of hesitation because it was apprehended that such interfering with Allah's house, though well meant, might bring upon the participants in the work of demolition His wrath and retribution. The hesitation was brought to an end, however, by the boldness of Al-Walîd ibn al-Mughîrah who first broke a little of the wall at one corner and then all waited for a night to see if any mischief befell him.[3] As nothing happened to him by that time they all started the work of pulling down the walls. The Quraysh clans organized themselves into four distinct groups, each undertaking to demolish and rebuild one of the four sides of the house. It would be interesting to note this grouping of the clans for this notable public work just five years prior to Muḥammad's (ﷺ) call to Prophethood. It stood as follows:

Clans	*Assignment*
(A) Banû 'Abd Manâf and Banû Zuhrah	The door and wall on that (i.e. east) side.
(B) Banû Makhzûm and some other clans	The wall between the Black Stone & the Yamanî corner.
(C) Banû Jumaḥ and Banû Sahm	The wall opposite the door side (i.e. west).
(D) Banû 'Abd al-Dâr, Banû Asad ibn 'Abd al-'Uzzâ and Banû Ka'b ibn Lu'ayy	The Ḥaṭîm and wall on that side.

The Prophet took part in work of reconstruction of the Ka'ba by carrying stones on his shoulders along with his uncle 'Abbâs.[4] The work of rebuilding progressed as usual but when the walls reached the height where the Black

1. Ibn Hishâm, I, 192-193.

2. Ibid., 194.

3. *Ibid.*

4. *Bukhârî*, nos. 364, 1582, 3829; *Muslim*, no. 340; *Musnad*, III, 295, 310, 333; V, 454, 455.

Stone needed to be reset in its place differences of opinion developed among the clans. Each of them desired to have the honour of resetting the stone. According to the division of work agreed upon, it would appear that this piece of work would devolve on either or both of the groups A and B indicated above. But opposition was offered to it by the others, particularly by group D who, as Ibn Isḥâq reports, uncompromisingly asserted their claim and dipped their hands in a bowl of blood, thus vowing to lay down their lives in fighting for what they conceived to be a singular honour.[1] The quarrels and stalemate continued for four or five days when, we are told, 'Umayyah ibn Mughîrah of Banû Makhzûm, who was the oldest among all the Quraysh, prevailed upon them to submit the dispute to the arbitration of the person who would be the first in the following morning to enter the Ka'ba compound from a particular side.[2] Fortunately for all of them the man who thus entered the Ka'ba compound turned out to be Muḥammad (ﷺ) and everyone welcomed him exclaiming: "This is the Trusted one; we accept him; he is Muḥammad."[3]

The chosen arbitrator proved himself equal to the occasion. He asked for a piece of cloth to be brought in for the purpose. When this was done he placed the stone on it and asked the leaders of the clans to hold the four sides of the cloth and then all raise the stone to the desired height at the desired spot. When that was done he himself again took the stone and positioned it in its place.[4]

Thus was the dispute resolved, an impending internecine war averted and the clannish ego of the leaders satisfied. Although the story thus furnishes a pleasing end to the drama, it obviously leaves a good deal to be said about the final act in it. It is just not an adequate explanation to say that the disputant clans who had pledged their lives for the sake of gaining the misconceived distinction all of a sudden agreed to stake their chances to the decision of a stranger who would be the first to enter the arena from a certain direction. Definitely a good deal of discussions and consultations had taken place on the subject and about the character and qualifications of the would

1. Ibn Hishâm, I, 196-197.

2. *Ibid*. The side indicated was Bâb Banî Shaybah or Banî 'Abd Shams (modern Bâb al-Salâm or Bâb al-Ṣafâ).

3. *Ibid*., 197. Ibn Isḥâq's words are: (فلما رأوه قالوا: هذا الأمين، رضينا، هذا محمد)

4. *Ibid*. Also *Musnad*, III, 425; *Ṭayâlisî*, No. 113.

be arbitrator. It is also unlikely that Muḥammad (ﷺ), who had himself actively participated in the work of rebuilding the Ka'ba and was in addition an intelligent and respectable member of his society, was unaware of the dispute and the developments connected with it, particularly of the decision to settle it by arbitration, and then became that arbitrator just by chance and on account of his simply being the first person to enter the Ka'ba compound from a certain direction. In any case, it is evident even from the story as it is that the Quraysh leaders welcomed him as the arbitrator not simply because he was the first person thus to enter the arena but clearly and decisively because he was *Al-'Amîn*, the "Trusted One", with proven integrity and reliability, in whose honesty and impartiality everyone had the most unreserved confidence. This is the essence of the whole story. The arbitration unmistakably marked a triumph for Muḥammad's (ﷺ) character and personality over the clan-spirit and family-pride of the Quraysh leaders of the time. It was indeed a national confirmation of his absolutely spotless character, his truthfulness, impartiality and popularity.

The authorities generally agree in saying that the reconstruction of the Ka'ba took place five years prior to the Prophet's receipt of the revelation. This means that up to that time, i.e., till roughly the age of thirty-five he was leading his life as an ordinary and respectable member of the society, taking part in its day-to-day activities, well known for his noble character and truthfulness and liked and trusted by all and sundry. The period of solitary stay and meditation which by all accounts preceded the coming of the revelation had not obviously started till that time. Exactly from which year or date such a noticeable turn in his way of life came is not known; but assuming that it followed not quite long after the reconstruction of the Ka'ba, it may be stated that such a period of solitary stay and contemplation did not exceed four years at the most.

VII: LACK OF FORMAL EDUCATION

Another remarkable aspect of his pre-prophetic life is his non-receipt of any formal education and his inability to read and write. The historians, although they are particular in relating many minor details about the Prophet's life and activities, do not give any indication of his having ever received any education whatsoever during his early life and youth. On the contrary there are a number of the Prophet's own statements to the effect that

he was an unlettered or untutored (*'ummiyy* أمي) person.[1] Also there are a number of statements in the Qur'ân itself that prove unmistakably that he did neither receive any formal education nor know reading and writing. This fact emerges from the term *'ummiyy* which in its singular and plural forms occurs in a total of six places in the Qur'ân[2] and which means both an illiterate and uneducated person (that is, one who is considered to be in the state of his mother's lap in respect of learning)[3] and also "one who has not received any revealed book".[4] Besides these passages, there are some others in the Qur'ân, e.g., 16:103; 25:4-5 and 29:48, which do not contain the term *'ummiyy* but which clearly prove that the Prophet did not know the art of reading and writing. The implications of these two types of the Qur'ânic passages will be discussed in connection with the orientalists' views about the Prophet's "illiteracy" and also in connection with their allegation that he received his knowledge from an "informant" or " informants" at Makka.[5]

Reference should be made in this connection, however, to the well-known incident in connection with the conclusion of the treaty of Ḥudaybiyah. It is stated that when the terms of the treaty were being written down by 'Alî (r.a.) on behalf of the Prophet, the Quraysh leader Suhayl objected to the expression *Rasûl Allah*, Messenger of Allah, being added to the Prophet's name. Hence the Prophet, in order to facilitate the conclusion of the treaty, asked 'Alî to delete the expression and to write instead simply "the son of 'Abd Allah". But 'Alî, out of understandable zeal and devotion, declined to interfere with the expression *Rasûl Allah*. Hence the Prophet took the paper from him and, according to some versions of the report, asked 'Alî to show the place where the expression was written, and on his being shown it he struck it off and then had the alternative expression "son of 'Abd Allah" written there, as suggested by the Quraysh leader.[6] Other versions state simply that in view of the Quraysh leader's objection to the expression *Rasûl Allah* the Prophet wrote "son of 'Abd Allah" instead.[7] With regard to

1. See for instance *Musnad*, II, 212. (فقال أنا محمد النبي الأمي أنا محمد النبي الأمي ثلاثا)
2. Q. 2:78; 3:20; 3:75; 7:157-158 and 62:2.
3. See *Lisân al-'Arab* under *'umm*.
4. *Infra*, Ch. X, sec.I.
5. *Infra*, Ch. X, sec. III.
6. *Bukhârî*, nos. 2731-2732, 2698, 3184; *Muslim*, nos. 1783-1784; *Musnad*, III, p. 268; IV, pp. 86, 291, 325, 330.
7. *Bukhârî*, no. 4251; *Musnad*, IV, p. 298; *Dârimî*, II, pp. 237-238; *Ṭayâlisî*, no. 713.

these latter versions it has been very aptly pointed out that the statement is to be taken in the sense in which communications written by heads of states and institutions are taken, namely, that they themselves do not write or draft the communications but they are written under their authority.[1] Even these latter versions do not say unequivocally that the Prophet himself wrote the words.

Some have attempted to reconcile these latter versions with the Qur'ânic testimony about the Prophet's illiteracy by assuming that the Prophet learnt a little bit of reading and writing later in his life and subsequent to the revelation of the Qur'ânic passages in question. This view is probably based on a tradition narrated by 'Awn ibn 'Abd Allah which says that "the Prophet did not die before he read and wrote."[3] This particular tradition is unanimously regarded as very "weak" and is rejected on the ground of its conflict with the Qur'ânic testimony.[4] It is also pointed out that had the Prophet subsequently learnt to read and write, that noticeable fact and the person or persons who helped him in acquiring the skill, would surely have been noted and reported by many of his companions. Hence the assumption cannot be sustained.[5]

1. *Fatḥ al-Bârî*, V., p. 217.

2. See for instance 'Izzat Darwâzah, *Sîrat al-Rasûl etc.* I, Beirut, 1400 H., p. 82.

3. Al Haythamî, *Majma' al-Zawâ'id etc.*, VII, Beirut, 1986, p. 274.

4. *Ibid.*

5. 'Abul-'A'lâ Maudûdî, *Sîrat -i-Sarwari-'Âlam*, (ed. Na'îm Ṣiddîqî and others), I., Lahore, 1978, p. 124 n.

CHAPTER VIII

ADOLESCENCE AND YOUTH: THE ORIENTALISTS' VIEWS

A number of observations and assumptions have been made by the orientalists regarding the Prophet's life prior to his receipt of the revelation. Quite a few of these assumptions bear heavily on his life as Prophet and on his mission as a whole. Nevertheless, since they relate in the first instance to his pre-prophetic life, it would be worthwhile to discuss them before noting the coming of revelation to him and the beginning of his prophetic activities.

In the main the orientalists' remarks and assumptions relate to the following topics:

(a) The Prophet's life as a shepherd;

(b) The nature of *Fijâr* wars and *Ḥilf al-Fuḍûl* and the Prophet's role in them;

(c) His trading activities;

(d) His marriage with Khadîjah;

(e) The state of his religious beliefs; and

(f) His alleged ambition and preparation for the role he subsequently played.

The last item embraces the question of his illiteracy and that of the influence of the contemporary situation upon him, particularly his alleged drawing on Judaism and Christianity and his allegedly having imbibed the erroneous scientific notions of the time and their consequent reproduction in the Qur'ân. This latter allegation is advanced lately by Watt. He also relates his economic interpretation of the rise of the Prophet and of Islam to the *Fijâr* wars and the *Ḥilf al-Fuḍûl*. The issues and points raised in all these are momentous and they require careful consideration. The present chapter deals with items (a), (c), (d) and (e). The rest are discussed in four successive chapters taking, in order, (i) Watt's theories about *Ḥarb al-Fijâr* and *Ḥilf al-Fuḍûl*, (ii) the allegation of ambition and preparation, (iii) the alleged drawing on Judaism and Christianity and (iv) the alleged contemporary errors in the Qur'ân.

I. REGARDING HIS LIFE AS A SHEPHERD

With regard to the Prophet's tending of sheep it has been suggested that

he earned money by that profession in order to support his needy uncle 'Abu Ṭâlib. Thus william Muir writes: "the hire received for this duty would contribute towards the support of his needly uncle Abu Ṭâlib."[1] Margoliouth goes a step further and says: "Abu Talib probably employed him in looking after the sheep and camels which he kept at 'Uranah, near Mt. Arafat".[2] The obvious innuendo of these statements is that the boy Muḥammad (ﷺ) received a rather step-fatherly treatment at 'Abû Ṭâlib's hand and that he was so needy at the time that he had to hire out his nephew as a shepherd for others for a pittance.

It may be noted that though there was no stigma or humiliation attached to the profession of tending sheep nor to earning money thereby, the above mentioned suggestions are not supported by any direct evidence. If the boy Muḥammad (ﷺ) was engaged in the tending of sheep, so were his cousins, the sons of 'Abû Ṭâlib. Also the assumption that the latter was very poor and needy when the Prophet was a boy is not correct. 'Abû Ṭâlib's financial position did of course deteriorate late in his life, but he was not that worse off earlier, till at least his trade journey to Syria when the Prophet was about twelve years old. Nor is the point about the latter's having earned money by tending sheep for others is well established by the sources. The solitary tradition mentioning his having tended sheep at or for *qarârîṭ* as noted earlier,[3] admits of different interpretations and is not in any case a clear evidence on the point. These facts need to be kept in mind while making any speculation about the Prophet's life as a shepherd boy.

Both Muir and Margoliouth also reproduce the tradition noted by Al-Ṭabarî[4] which says that twice while tending sheep the Prophet thought of enjoying night-life of the town but on each occasion he was overtaken by sleep before he could even reach the supposed place of enjoyment.[5] Muir accepts the reported statement as correct and observes: "making every allowance for the fond reverence which paved an easy way for the currency of such stories, it is quite in keeping with the character of Mahomet that he should have shrunk from the coarse and licentious practices of his youthful

1. W. Muir, *The Life of Mahomet*, 3rd edition, 1893, p. 17 (1st edition, Vol. II., p. 12).
2. D.S. Margoliouth, *Mohammed and the Rise of Islam*, 3rd edition, 1905, p. 51.
3. *Supra*, pp. 163-164.
4. Al-Ṭabarî, II, 279 (1 / 1126-1127).
5. Muir, *op.cit*, 3rd edn., p. 18; 1st edn., pp. 14-15; Margoliouth, *op.cit*, p. 52.

friends."[1] Margoliouth, however, casts doubt on the Prophet's veracity and remarks: "if we are to believe him, sleep fell on him miraculously before he could so disgrace himself".[2]

Of late, toeing the lines of Muir and Margoliouth A . Guillaume has reproduced the report in full as a footnote to his translation of Ibn Isḥâq's work.[3] He introduces it by way of explainig a remark of Suhaylî's. The latter, it may be recalled,[4] while commenting upon the incident of the Prophet's not taking his shirt off when carrying stones in connection with some work at the Ka'ba, says that the incident probably occurred twice. Guillaume suggests that this assumption of "twice" on Suhaylî's part has been prompted by the term "twice" occurring in the above mentioned tradition. Guillaume's real reason for reproducing the tradition, however, appears to be what he further says in this connection. He says that though Ibn Isḥâq gives the story of the boy Muḥammad's (ﷺ) sense of modesty, Al-Ṭabarî "omits the story altogether and in its place" inserts the story about the intended nocturnal enjoyment.

For these reasons a little closer look at the report in question is necessary. In the first place, though Al-Ṭabarî states that he had the report from Ḥumayd who received it from Salama to whom, it is stated, Muḥammad ibn Isḥâq narrated it on the basis of others' narrations, it is strange that the report is not inserted in Ibn Isḥâq's *sîrah* as edited by Ibn Hishâm. It is hard to assume that the report was originally in Ibn Isḥâq's work but was subsequently omitted by Ibn Hishâm; for, he is particular in mentioning what he omits and what he adds of his own comments or notes. Guillaume himself does not appear to think that the report was originally inserted by Ibn Isḥâq in his work. Hence this very fact of Ibn Isḥâq's not having recorded the report and yet its being traced to him in a subsequent work raises serious doubts about its authenticity. Secondly, the wordings of the report recorded in Al-Ṭabarî and some other works subsequent to it do not agree with one another.[5] This discrepancy in the wordings leaves no room for doubt that the

1. Muir, *op.cit.*

2. Margoliouth, *op.cit.*

3. A. Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad: A Translation of Ibn Isḥâq's Sîrat Rasûl Allah*, 5th impression, Karachi, 1958, p. 81 n.

4. *Supra*, p. 166.

5. Compare for instance the text in Al-Ṭabarî and that in Ibn Kathîr, *Al-Bidâyah etc.*, II, 287-288.

reporters themselves introduced their own words and expressions in the story and that therefore it is not a verbatim report of what the Prophet might have said, if he did at all, on the subject. Thirdly, the report as it is given by Al-Ṭabarî says that the Prophet was tending sheep in the "upper part" of Makka (باعلى مكة) and that he asked his shepherd colleague to look after his sheep through the night,etc. Now, it was not usual for shepherds, if not quite away from their own homes and at distant oases, to keep their sheep in the field at night and themselves remain away from home. The internal evidence of the story thus indicates that something is wrong with it. Hence Ibn Kathîr, while noting the report, rightly points out that it is "very strange and unusual" and that something has been mixed up in the process of transmission of the report.[1]

Another insinuation against the Prophet has been made by Margoliouth. He says that the Prophet had a love for sport and merry-making and remarks: "and indeed even when Prophet he had a taste for the performance of singing girls."[2] As his authority for this statement Margoliouth cites two traditions in the *Musnad*.[3] Both the traditions, it may be noted, relate to occasions of marriage ceremonies and do not in any way concern the Prophet's personal participation in or enjoyment of any sport or singing performance. To ilustrate how the text has been misinterpreted we quote in full the tradition on which the insinuation about singing girls has been founded. It runs as follows:[4]

﴿ ... عن جابر قال قال رسول الله ﷺ لعائشة أهديتم الجارية إلى بيتها . قالت نعم قال فهلا بعثتم معهم من يغنيهم يقول أتيناكم أتيناكم فحيونا نحياكم فإن الأنصار قوم فيهم غزل . ﴾

Translation: "It is narrated by Jâbir. He said that the Messenger of Allah, may peace and blessings of Allah be on him, said to 'Â'ishah (r.a.): 'Have you started the bride on her way to her (husband's) house?' She said: 'Yes'. He (the Messenger of Allah) said: 'Have you not sent with them (the bridal party) someone who will sing to them saying: We have come to you, we have come to you; so welcome us; we welcome you. For the Helpers (*anṣâr*) are a people with a custom for such felicitating rhyme (*ghazal*)."

It is clear that the tradition refers to a particular custom among the Help-

1. *Ibid*, p. 288. See also Muḥammad al-Ghazâlî, *Fiqh al-Sîrah*, 7th edition, 1978, pp. 72-73 n.

2. Margoliouth, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

3. *Musnad*, III, p. 391; IV, p. 67.

4. *Musnad*, III, p. 391.

ers relating to the sending of a bride to her husband's house. The specific wording of the rhyme is also given in the tradition. Also it was the custom that little girls and boys should vanguard the bridal party reciting the rhyme. The whole purpose of such performance was not simply an expression of joy on the happy occasion, but mainly to make the conclusion of marriage known to society and to discourage the performance of marriage secretly and unobtrusively.[1] By no stretch of the imagination this tradition, and the others to the same effect, can be construed to show a liking on the Prophe's part for the performance of singing girls, an expression that conveys a totally different impression.

II. SPECULATIONS ABOUT THE PROPHET'S TRADING ACTIVITIES

That the Prophet did engage himself in some trading activities is clear from the sources. It is also well known that he made two trade journeys to Syria, once in company with his uncle 'Abû Ṭâlib and again as leader of Khadijah's (r.a.) caravan when he was about twenty-five years old. If he had made any other trade journeys to distant lands that would surely have been noted by the chroniclers or reported by his many companions as an important event in his life. Basing upon the above mentioned facts, however, the orientalists have made a number of far-fetched and wide speculations.

Thus W. Muir, writing in connection with the Prophet's second journey to Syria, makes him visit a number of other places, though there is not the slightest indication in the sources to such excursions. Muir says that though the direct route from Makka to Bosra lay a great way east of the Mediterranean, it was possible that either in connection with that journey or on the former journey the Prophet might have seen the Mediterranean sea and even visited Gaza, "the favourite entrepot of the Meccan merchants." The reason adduced by him is: "His reference in the Coran to ships gliding majestically on the waters, *like mountains*, point to a larger class of vessels than he was likely to see on the Red Sea." It is further stated that the vivid pictures of sea-storms and waves drawn in the Qur'ân might have been seen by the Prophet from the Arabian shore, but the "mountain ships" he saw "more likely from the Syrian."[2]

This statement of the Prophet's having visited the shores of the Medi-

1. See for interpretation of this tradition and some others to the same effect in 'Aḥmad 'Abd al-Raḥmân al-Bannâ al-Sâ'atî, *Al-Fatḥ al-Rabbânî*, Part XVI, pp. 212-213.

2. Muir, *op.cit.*, 3rd edn., p. 21 n 1 (1st edn., II, p. 20 n.)

terranean and the port of Gaza is a pure conjecture based on an equally untenable assumption that he himself composed the Qur'ân incorporating in it his own knowledge and experiences. The incorrectness of this latter hypothesis will be discussed elsewhere in this work.[1] Here only it may be pointed out that the "vivid pictures" of sea-storms and "mountain ships" found in the Qur'ân could not have been drawn even by a casual view of them from the shores alone. Also, had the Prophet visited the shores of the Mediterranean, not to speak of Gaza, either on his first or on his second journey to Syria, that fact would have found mention in the chronicles or in the traditions in some form or other. For, after all, he did not make any trade journey to such distant lands all alone and without being accompanied by a number of others who became subsequently either his friends or enemies.

Obviously taking his cue from Muir, Margoliouth extends the scope of the Prophet's imaginary travels in all directions, east and west, north and south, and makes him visit all the countries in and bordering the Arabian peninsula—Syria, Persia, Ḥîra, Baḥrayn, Yaman, Egypt and Abyssinia. "The Koran shows him," writes Margoliouth, "acquainted with travelling by sea as well as by land; he there describes the motions of the ships and the results of storms with a realism which savours of experience."[2] Thus avoiding the unreasonableness in Muir's assumption, namely, that a casual glance from the shores could not have imparted such realism in the Qur'ânic description, Margoliouth makes the Prophet not simply stand on the shores of the Arabian Sea and the Mediterranean but also travel by land as well as by sea. Margoliouth further says that the Prophet knew a sweet sea as well as a salt sea, "the two, he supposed, were kept from combining by a dam"; that there is reason to suppose that he saw the Dead Sea, the rock-tombs of Al-Hijr, the villages in Baḥrayn and a "breed of tailless sheep in Yemen", all of which find mention by him in some form or other.[3]

It is not necessary to point out how closely and faithfully Margoliouth follows Muir in these conjectures. The same assumption underlies them, namely, that the Prophet himself composed the text of the Qur'ân; but Margoliouth adds a new dimension to it. He advances another hypothesis, that the Prophet took advantage of all these travels and journeys to acquire

1. *Infra*, chaps. XI & XIII.
2. Margoliouth, *op.cit.*, p. 57.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 58.

all sorts of knowledge and thus made a rather long-drawn preparation for the role he subsequently played. That hypothesis will be dealt with presently. In the meantime it may simply be asked: If everything stated in the Qur'ân is taken to be based on the Prophet's personal knowledge and experience, why not believe in the vivid descriptions of paradise and hell given therein, specially when there are reports categorically stating that he had a view of them in the course of a special journey made by him?

Of late Watt also has lent support to the Muir-Margoliouth conjectures. Thus describing the Prophet's early life in what he conceives to be the light of the Qur'ân Watt observes in his latest work on the subject: "In the passage describing a storm at sea (10:22...) some would hold that the vividness of the description implied personal experience of a storm; and in that case Muḥammad must have voyaged across the Red Sea to Ethiopia."[1] Why Ethiopia, of all places, and why only the Red Sea where, according to Muir, the "mountain ships" could not be found, are not indicated by Watt. He adds, however, that such experiences might have been familiar to many others as well at Makka. Again, a little further on, while referring to the Qur'ânic passage revealed at Madina and speaking about an attempt by some section of the people to mislead the Prophet on the occasion of the battle of 'Uḥud (4:113) Watt says that "it is conceivable that it might refer to attempts of the Meccans before the Hijra to 'lead him astray' by engulfing him in commerce."[2] Watt does not explain how it is "conceivable" to put such a construction on the passage, nor does he cite any fact or authority to support the conjecture that the Makkans did, before the *hijrah*, attempt to lead the Prophet astray by "engulfing" him in commerce.

More remarkable is that this latest observation of his runs somewhat counter to what he says in his ealier work about the Prophet's trading activities, suggesting that he was excluded from the inner circle of traders and from the most profitable operations. In fact Watt makes a number of suggestions, each in effect contradicting the other. This is how he does so. He first says that although there is no record of the Prophet's having travelled to Syria again "does not mean that he did not do so, though it is always possible that he entrusted the oversight of his business to others."[3] Having thus sug-

1. W.M. Watt, *Muḥammad's Mecca: History in the Qur'ân*, Edinburgh University Press, 1988, p. 48.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 50.

3. Watt, *M. at M.*, p. 38.

gested that the Prophet might have again travelled to Syria or might have entrusted the job to his agent, that is, he was in any case engaged, like the others, in Makka's international trade, Watt seems to have remembered his laboriously built theory of an acute trade rivalry between Banû Hâshim and their allies on the one hand and Banû 'Abd Shams, Banû 'Abd al-Dâr and their allies on the other, and his further theory that the latter excluded the former from the field of Makka's external trade. Therefore he quickly adds a reservation or rather a virtual contradiction to the above mentioned statement saying immediately: "The possibility should also be kept in mind, however, that he was excluded from the inner circle of traders and from the most profitable operations."[1] But again, having made this last observation, he seems to realize that he was too close on to the time when the Prophet is found to have given his daughter in marriage to a member of the influential Banû 'Abd Shams and two other daughters to the sons of another influential member of his own clan, Abû Lahab. Hence Watt hurries to carry out another about-turn saying: "It is unlikely, however, that he was altogether excluded, since he was able to marry his daughter Zaynab to a member of the clan of 'Abd Shams... The fact that two other daughters were betrothed to two sons of Abû Lahab,... suggests that, Muḥammad, too, was regarded as one of the most promising youths of the clan."[2]

Thus in three consecutive sentences at one place Watt would have us believe that (a) the Prophet probably carried on trade with Syria either by travelling there personally again or through his agent; (b) that he was possibly excluded from such profitable operations and from the inner circle of Makka's traders, and (c) that it was unlikely that he was so excluded because he was very much in close relationship with that "inner circle" and the mercantile élite of the city. Needless to say that Watt could have saved himself the trouble of making such contradictory conjectures had he not been caught in the web of his misconceived theory of an acute trade war between Banû Hâshim and the others on which he builds many other conjectures. The truth is that neither Banû Hâshim in general nor the Prophet in particular were ever excluded from the so-called "most profitable" operations, nor did the so-called Makkan inner circle ever attempt before the *hijrah* to divert the Prophet from his mission by "engulfing" him in commerce.

1. *Iibd.*, pp. 38-39.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 39.

III. CONCERNING THE PROPHET'S MARRIAGE WITH KHADÎJAH (R.A.)

The orientalists' remarks regarding the Prophet's marriage with Khadîjah (r.a.) concentrate on three matters—(a) his motive in marrying her; (b) her age at the time of the marriage and (c) the manner in which the marriage was performed.

As regards the Prophet's motive, the main insinuation has been made by Margoliouth. He alleges that the Prophet delayed marrying till the twenty-fifth year of his age because he was a calculating and ambitious individual and waited for an opportunity for improving his material position through marriage. In this connection Margoliouth castigates not only the Prophet but also the Arabs in general for their alleged passion saying; "Mohammed, though not without his share of that passion of which the Talmud rightly says nine parts have been given to the Arabs, and only one to the rest of the world, waited to marry till he could better himself thereby."[1]

The above is a glaringly spiteful remark. It is an acknowledged fact that Khadîjah (r.a.) was a very rich lady and that the Prophet's material position was undoubtedly improved by this marriage. This fact is attested by the Qur'ân. It is also true that when Khadîjah's (r.a.) agent Nafîsah asked the Prophet about the reason for his not having married till then, he frankly stated his financial insufficiency for undertaking the responsibilities of married life. But these facts cannot be twisted to suggest that he entertained a plan to improve his financial position by marrying a wealthy lady, not to speak of Khadîjah (r.a.) only. That he did not dream of marrying her is evident from the fact that all the authorities are unanimous in saying that it was she herself, not the Prophet, who took the initiative in the matter and made the proposal for the marriage. Secondly, the statement of her agent, Nafîsah, shows that the Prophet was unmistakably surprised when she disclosed Khadîjah's (r.a.) name as the proposed bride. On hearing Nafîsah the Prophet remarked: "How could that be for me?" He ultimately signified his assent to Nafîsah to proceed with the matter only when she made it clear that she had been acting under instructions from Khadîjah (r.a.) herself.[2] These indisputable facts militate against any assumption of a prior design on the Prophet's part to improve his material position by marrying a wealthy lady like Khadîjah

1. Margoliouth, *op.cit.*, p. 66. Cf. his remark at his p. 69 where he reflects adversely on the Prophet's potency.

2. *Supra*, p. 174.

(r.a.).

Equally untenable is the logic employed to create doubt about Khadîjah's (r.a.) age at the time of her marriage with the Prophet. "She was some years older than Mohammed", writes Margoliouth, "but assuredly not forty, as Mohammed's biographers assert; though the legend makes some of the bedouin ladies keep their good looks till eighty or even hundred, and the Kurashite women were regarded as an exception to the law which renders child-bearing impossible after sixty."[1] And almost echoing him Watt asserts: "The age of Khadîjah has perhaps been exaggerated. The names of seven children she bore to Muḥammad are mentioned in the sources... Even if, as one of Ibn Sa'd's authorities says, they came at regular yearly intervals, that would make her forty-eight before the last was born. This is by no means impossible, but one would have thought it sufficiently unusual to merit comment; it is even the sort of thing that might well have been treated as miraculous. Yet no single word or comment occurs in the pages of Ibn Hishâm, Ibn Sa'd or at-Ṭabarî."[2]

Now, some later works on *sîrah* do of course mention a few different sayings about Khadîjah's (r.a.) age at her marriage with the Prophet;[3] but the earlier authorities like Ibn Sa'd and Al-Ṭabarî accept the report saying that she was forty at the time. The logic employed by Margoliouth and Watt to create doubt on the point, that of the age-limit for child-bearing, and the supposition that her age "has perhaps been exaggerated" are, however, both gratuitous. Margoliouth speaks of sixty as the age when child-bearing should be considered unusual; but that age-limit is clearly not applicable in the present instance. Watt, on the other hand, seems to rectify Margoliouth in this respect; but in doing so he (Watt) too is somewhat beside the mark. For, calculating, as he does, on the basis of yearly births, the birth of the seventh child should be placed in the forty-seventh and not in the forty-eighth year of her age. But then, according to some view, the number of her children was six, the names of Ṭayyib and Ṭâhir having both been used for one and the same child.[4] The age-limit would thus be reduced by another year to forty-

1. Margoliouth, *op.cit*, p. 67.

2. Watt, *M. at M.*, p. 38.

3. See for instance Ibn Kathîr (701-747 H.), *Al-Sîrat al-Nabawiyyah*, (ed. Muṣṭafâ 'Abd al-Wâḥid), I., Beirut, n.d., p. 264; *Al-Ḥalabi*, I, p. 229.

4. See Ibn Hishâm, I., 190, n.3 and Suhaylî, I., 214.

six. Even allowing some gaps and accepting Watt's calculation that her last child was born in her forty-eighth year, it would not be quite unusual or unnatural for any lady of sound health, neither in ancient nor in modern times to bear a child at such age.[1]

Watt himself acknowledges that this is "by no means improbable."; yet he argues that such an event is sufficiently unusual to merit comment" and that it "was the sort of thing that might well have been treated as miraculous", but Ibn Hishâm, Ibn Sa'd and Al-Ṭabarî record it without a single word of comment. The innuendo is that these early Muslim authorities were eager to grasp at every unusual event and cite it as a miracle for their Prophet. If they had really been so inclined to twist every unusual occurrence as a miracle they would surely have made a point out of the present case. Indeed, neither these historians nor their authorities would have exaggerated her age if they had no axe to grind thereby. Hence the very fact that they do not express any surprise on this point means, on the one hand, that they did not simply consider child-birth at about the forty-eighth year of the mother's age anything unusual and, on the other hand, that they did not exaggerate the age; for they had no purpose in doing so. Obviously it is not fair and logical first to assume that those authorities exaggerated Khadîjah's (r.a.) age and then to use their silence about the supposed unusual birth of her child as an argument in support of the allegation of exaggeration.

Lastly, about the manner in which the marriage took place. W. Muir, following Weil and Sprenger,[2] adopts a report which is noted by Al-Wâqidî along with a number of other reports on the subject and which says that Khadîjah, (r.a.) fearing that her father Khuwaylid would not consent to the proposed marriage, had recourse to a contrivance. She prepared a grand feast for her father and when he was "well drunk and merry" made him unite her in marriage to the Prophet "in the presence of his uncle Hamza", and that when the old man came to his senses he was furious and wanted to revoke the act but was ultimately persuaded to accept the *fait accompli*.[3]

It must be noted that Al-Wâqidî, while giving an account of the marriage

1. The present writer himself saw a child born to a colleague of his at Riyadh in 1984 (an Indian national) when his wife was nearly fifty. Also a British lady (of Greek origin) gave birth to a son some years ago in London when she was well over forty.

2. Cited by Muir, *op. cit*, 1st edition, II., p. 24 n.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 23-24 (third edition, p. 23).

on the basis of other reports, refers to this one as well by way of pointing out that it was a mistaken and unreliable account.[1] Al-Ṭabarî also does the same, namely, he mentions it and then adds his own comment saying that it is untrue and unreliable.[2] Both these authorities also point out that Khadîjah's (r.a.) father Khuwaylid died before the *Fijâr* war and that her uncle 'Amr ibn Asad acted as guardian for her marriage. And althought Ibn Isḥâq at first says that Khuwaylid gave her in marriage, he (Ibn Isḥâq) rectifies his mistake at a later stage in his work and mentions that 'Amr gave her in marriage.[3]

Clearly Muir has misled his readers by suppressing the fact that Al-Waqidî, whom he quotes as the authority for the report, unequivocally characterizes it as untrue and unreliable. Muir of course argues that since the report got currency in spite of what he says the proneness of the Muslim scholars to suppress every report that is discreditable to their Prophet, it must be accepted "as a fact".[4] In this statement too Muir is mistaken. The Muslim scholars did *not* suppress any report found to be discreditable to the Prophet, not at least this one. On the contrary they, in their eagerness to preserve every information that was available about him, took care to note whatever they came across, sometimes adding their own comments and observations regarding a particular report. That is exactly what Al-Wâqidî and Al-Ṭabarî have done in the present instance.

If Muir had been less inclined to lend credence to whatever appears discreditable to the Prophet and if he had applied his critical mind he could have seen that the report contains in itself elements of its spuriousness. It is said that Khadîjah (r.a.) had her father drunk, then slaughtered a cow, prepared a marriage feast, invited Muḥammad's (ﷺ) uncles and other relatives and got the marriage performed, etc. Now, such an elaborate preparation would require a whole night or a whole day, and it is manifestly unthinkable that her father Khuwaylid should have remained under the influence of the drink for so long a time. It is also unlikely that her brothers and other rel-

1. Ibn Sa'd, I, 133. Al-Wâqidi writes:

(فهذا كله عندنا غلط ووهل، والثبت عندنا المحفوظ عن أهل العلم أن أباها خويلد بن أسد مات قبل الفجار وأن عمها عمرو بن أسد زوجها رسول الله ﷺ)

2. *Al-Ṭabarî, Târikh*, II, 282 (I / 1129).
3. See Suhaylî, I, 214.
4. Muir, *op. cit.*, 1st edition, II, 24-25.

atives would have remained completely silent and conniving at her work. Indeed, the story is so absurd that it cannot be conceived of unless we assume at the same time that there was an elaborate conspiracy hatched by Khadîjah (r.a.) and her relatives against her father—a situation which is not at all borne out by the sources. Moreover, it is equally unthinkable that the Prophet's uncles and relatives, who by all accounts were present at the ceremony, would have so presented themselves at Khuwaylid's house without any invitation having been made by him and on a mere surreptitious summonning by his daughter. Thus, even if Al-Wâqidî had not pointed out the unreliability of the story, a little critical look at it would have been sufficient to expose its spuriousness.

It may further be pointed out that the report emanates from 'Abû Midlaz (Lâhiq ibn Ḥumayyid) who was a *tâbi'î* and who died in 106 or 109 H.[1] He says Khadîjah (r.a.) stated to him etc. Now, 'Abû Midlaz was born long after her death. He could thus by no means have got the narration from her. Hence the story is clearly a later fabrication and cannot be relied upon, as Al-Wâqidî rightly points out.

IV: CONCERNING THE STATE OF HIS RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

More serious are, however, the remarks made by the orientalists concerning the Prophet's religious attitude and practices prior to his receipt of the revelation. It has been alleged that he was more or less a polytheist like the rest of his people and worshipped or revered some of the idols. This allegation is quite contrary to the reports mentioned earlier about his pre-prophetic religious state.[2] This allegation has been made mainly by Margoliouth though he took over some points from his predecessors as the others subsequent to him have taken over from him.

Margoliouth's arguments are as follows:

(a) "The names of some of the children show that their parents, when they named them were idolators."[3]

(b) "He [the Prophet] with Khadijah performed some domestic rite in honour of one of the goddesses each night before retiring."[4]

(c) "He confessed to having at one time sacrificed a grey sheep to Al-

1. *Taqrîb al-Tahdhîb*, II, 340.
2. *Supra*, pp. 164-166.
3. Margoliouth, *op.cit.*, pp. 69-70.
4. *Ibid.*, 70, citing *Musnad*, IV, p. 222.

'Uzzâ".[1]

(d) It was the monotheist Zayd ibn 'Amr who inspired Muḥammad (ﷺ) to dislike meat offered to idols.[2]

(e) Though the Prophet railed against idolatry "he had not that physical repugnance to it which men had often had: otherwise the kissing of the Black Stone would not have been a ceremony for which he yearned when deprived of it, and which he permanently retained."[3]

As regards the first argument Margoliouth does not cite any authority nor does he elucidate it in his work under reference. The point has been reiterated, however, by a subsequent writer who cites an authority in support of the statements. This question would therefore be taken up when we come to consider that writer's views on the matter.[4]

As regards the argument at (b) Margoliouth cites the authority of a tradition in the *Musnad*.[5] To see how this particular tradition has been misunderstood or misused it is necessary to quote its text which is as follows:

(حدثنا... ابن عروة عن أبيه قال حدثني جار لخديجة بنت خويلد أنه سمع النبي ﷺ وهو يقول لخديجة والله لا أعبد اللات والعزى والله لا أعبد أبدا قال فتقول خديجة خل اللات خل العزى قال كانت صنمهم التي كانوا يعبدون ثم يضطجعون)

Translation: "... Ibn 'Urwah, narrating from his father, stated: 'A neighbour of Khadîjah bint Khuwaylid related to me that he (the neighbour) heard the Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be on him, saying to Khadîjah: 'O Khadijah, by Allah, I do not worship *Lât* and *'Uzzâ*, by Allah, I never do. He (the neighbour) says, at this Khadîjah said: 'Leave that *Lât*, leave that *'Uzzâ*.' He (the neighbour) said: 'Those were the idols they [the people] used to worship before retiring at night."

Now, it is obvious that Margoliouth has based his assumption on the last sentence of the tradition. In doing so, however, he has either failed to understand it properly or he has distorted it. It is clear that the expression: "those were the idols they used to worship before retiring at night" which is a statement of Khadîjah's neighbour, refers to the practice of the Quraysh people in general, and not at all to that of the Prophet and Khadîjah (r.a.). This is obvious from the context as well as from the grammatical rules governing the

1 Margoliouth, *op.cit.*, 70, citing Wellhausen, *Reste*, 34.
2. Margoliouth, *op.cit.*, 70, citing *Musnad*, I, p. 189.
3. Margoliouth, *op.cit.*, 79.
4. *Infra*, pp. 204-210.
5. *Musnad*, IV, p. 222.

text. As regards the context, it would be incongruous and self-contradictory on the part of the reporter to state, as he did, that he heard the Prophet telling his wife that he never worshipped the idols and then to state, at the same time, that the Prophet and his wife used to worship those idols! Indeed there would be no point in the reporter's making such a statement unless he wanted to contradict and discredit the Prophet which, by no stretch of the imagination, can be assumed to have been the reporter's intention in the present instance.

As regards the gramamtical rules, it is worth noting that there are three verbs in the last clause of the sentence, namely, *kânû* (كانوا), *ya'budûna* (يعبدون) and *yadṭaji'ûna* (يضطجعون), all in the plural, in contradistinction to the dual form. Had these verbs been intended at all to refer to the Prophet and his wife, they would invariably have been framed in the dual form, i.e., *kânâ* (كانا), *ya'budâni* (يعبدان) and *yadṭaji'âni* (يضطجعان), as demanded by the Arabic grammatical rules.[1] The obvious meaning of the expression is that, after having reported what he heard the Prophet telling his wife the narrator adds a description of the idols saying that those were the idols "they", i.e. the Quraysh people, used to worship before going to bed at night. It is also noteworthy that the very description of the idols as *their* idols precludes any other conclusion. For the two idols mentioned here were neither introduced and inaugurated by the Prophet and his wife, nor were they (the two idols) exclusive to the Prophet's or Khadîjah's (r.a.) family. Hence the narrator could in no way have spoken of the idols in question as *their*, that is the Prophet's and Khadijah's (r.a.) idols. Both grammatically and linguistically the reference is unmistakably to the Quraysh people in general. Hence the very authority which Margoliouth adduces in support of his allegation only proves to the contrary showing that the Prophet forcefully stated, and that also to his wife, from whom he had no reason to hide anything about his habits, saying that he did never worship the idols.

In support of his statement at (c), namely, that the Prophet allegedly once confessed to having sacrificed a grey sheep to Al-'Uzzâ, Margoliouth cites the authority of J.Wellhausen's *Reste*, 34.[2] This latter scholar in fact bases his assertion on a report which occurs in the work of Yâqût and also in that

1. This has been pointed out by many a scholar. See for instance Akram Khân, *op. cit.*, p. 305.

2. i.e.J. Wellhausen, *Reste Arabischen Heidentums*, 2nd edn, Berlin, 1897.

of 'Abû al-Mundhir (ibn al-Kalbî). In his book *Mu'jam al-Buldân* Yâqût, while giving an account of Al-'Uzzâ, writes: "'Abû al-Mundhir has said: 'We heard [وقد بلغنا] that the Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be on him, mentioned her [Al-'Uzzâ] once and said: I offered a grey sheep to Al-'Uzzâ when I was following the religion of my people."[1] It is clear that Yâqût had the report from 'Abû al-Mundhir. In fact not only this report but the whole of Yâqût's description of Al-'Uzzâ is a verbatim reproduction or rather a blatant plagiarism of what 'Abû al-Mundhir writes about that idol in his *The Book of Idols*.[2]

Now, all the recognized authorities on *ḥadîth* literature treat this 'Abû al-Mundhir as a notorious falsifier and fabricator of traditions and declare unanimously that he should not at all be trusted and relied upon in matters concerning the Prophet's character and questions of legal and theological rules. Thus Ibn Ḥibbân, one of the early authorities on *ḥadîth*, characterizes 'Abû al-Mundhir as an extreme *Shî'î*, very prolix in telling strange stories and reports of which there is no foundation in fact. Ibn Ḥibbân further says that 'Abû al-Mundhir's mistakes and fabrications are so notorious that they do not require description.[3] Similarly Ibn Ḥajar castigates 'Abû al-Mundhir and quotes Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal as saying that he ('Abû al-Mundhir) was a cheap story-teller and gossip-monger. Ibn Ḥajar also quotes Al-Dâraquṭnî as saying that 'Abû al-Mundhir is always to be aviocded.[4] Equally unfavourable is the opinion of Al-Dhahabî. He mentions that Ibn 'Asâkir characterized him as a *Râfiḍî*.[5] These are by way of examples only.[6] 'Abû al-Mundhir him-

1. Yâqût, *Mu'jam al-Buldân*, Beirut, n.d., IV, 116.

2. 'Abû al-Mundhir (Hishâm ibn Muḥamad ibn al-Sâ'ib al-Kalbî, d. 204 / 206 h.), *Kitâb al-Aṣnâm*, ed. Aḥmed Zakî Pascha, Cairo, 1914. Compare specially Yâqût's text with that of 'Abû al-Mundhir's pp. 18-19. His description of Al-'Uzzâ occupies his pp. 17-27.

3. Ibn Ḥibbân (Muḥammad ibn Ḥibbân ibn Aḥmad 'Abû Ḥâtim al-Tamîmî al-Bustî, d. 354 H.), *Kitâb al-Majrûḥîn Min al-Muḥaddithîn wa al-Ḍu'afâ' wa al-Matrûkîn*, Vol. I-III (ed. Muḥammad Ibrâhîm Zayd), Aleppo, 1396, III, 91.

4. Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalânî, *Lisân al-Mizân*, VI, Beirut, third impression, 1406 / 1986, p. 196 (no. 700).

5. Al-Dhahabî, *Mîzân al-I'tidâl*, (ed. 'Alî Muḥammad al-Bukhârî) VI, Dâr al-Ma'rifah, Beirut, pp. 304-305. See also *Al-Mughnî Fî al-Ḍu'afâ' al-Kabîr* (ed. Nûr al-Dîn 'Asîr), II, n.d., p. 711, no. 6756.

6. See also Al-'Aqîl ('Abû Ja'far Muḥammad ibn 'Amr ibn Ḥammâd), *Kitâb al-Ḍu'afâ' al-Kabîr*, (ed. 'Abd al-Mu'ṭî 'Amîn Qal'ajî) First impression, Beirut, n.d., p. 339, No. 1945; Aḥmad Zakî Pascha's introduction to the *Kitâb al-Aṣnâm*, *op.cit.*, p. 17; *Tahdhîb al-Tahdhîb*, XII, p. 269.

self confesses to his having on many occasions fabricated reports and provided false information.[1] Even by his own wording of the report under consideration it is a mere hearsay (وقد بلغنا). Thus the report which the orientalists persistently cite had long before the appearance of their writings been rejected as a fabricated and unreliable one. It stands condemned as a hearsay by the admission of Ibn al-Kalbî himself.

As regards his argument at (d), namely, that it was the monotheist Zayd ibn 'Amr who is reported to have inspired the Prophet to dislike meat offered to idols, Margoliouth of course cites a tradition recorded in the *Musnad*.[2] It says that Zayd ibn 'Amr ibn Nufayl[3] once passed by the Prophet and Zayd ibn Ḥârithah. At that time Zayd ibn 'Amr was asked to partake of a meal prepared for the former two but he declined to do so saying that he did not eat anything slaughtered on an altar (*nuṣub*). The narrator adds that thereafter the Prophet was not seen eating anything slaughtered on an altar.

This tradition about a meeting between the Prophet and Zayd ibn 'Amr ibn Nufayl and the incident of the meal has come down to us through different chains of narrators in various versions with considerable additions and alterations.[4] This fact is in itself a clear proof that things have been mixed up in the course of transmission of the report. So far as the report in the *Musnad* is concerned a few points need to be noted specially. In the first place, among its narrators is Mas'ûdî about whom it is generally held that he used to mix up matters and that therefore any report coming through him could not be cited as evidence.[5] Also two other narrators, Nufayl ibn Hishâm and his father Hishâm (ibn Sa'îd) are not quite trustworthy.[6] In another version

1. *Kitâb al-Aṣnâm, op.cit*, p. 21.

2. *Musnad*, I, 189-190. (Margoliouth, *op.cit.*, 70).

3. He was a *ḥanîf* and a paternal cousin of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭâb's, both Al-Khaṭṭâb and 'Amr being brothers. Their father Nufayl ibn 'Abd al-'Uzzâ was the sixth in descent from Ka'b ibn Lu'ayy.

4. See for instance, besides the *Musnad*, *Bukhârî*, nos. 3826 and 5499; Al-Ṭabarânî, *Al-Mu'jam al-Kabîr*, Vol. I., second impression, n.d., p. 151 and Vol. V, pp. 86-87; Al-Bayhaqî, *Dalâ'il al-Nubuwwah etc.*, Vol. II, Beirut, 1985, pp. 120-128, 144; Al-Dhahabî, *Siyar 'A'lâm al-Nubalâ'*, Vol. I., Beirut, 1986, pp. 220-222; Al-Haythamî, *Majma' al-Zawâ'id etc.*, Vol. IX, Beirut, 1986, pp. 420-421. It has been recorded also by Nasâ'î in his section on *manâqib*. See also Al-Dhahabî, *Al-Sîrat al-Nabawiyyah* (ed. 'Umar 'Abd al-Salâm Tadmurî), first impression, Beirut, 1987, pp. 85-92, where almost all the different versions have been reproduced.

5. Al-Ṭabarânî, *Al-Mu'jam al-Kabir*, I, *op.cit.*, p. 151, f.n.

Muḥammad ibn 'Amr ibn 'Alqam is one of the narrators. He, too, is considered untrustworthy.[1] Hence this particular version in the *Musnad* is considered 'weak'.[2] In fact the entire portion of the report from "Zayd met them" (فمر بهما زيد) to the end of his reported remarks is a mixing up of what actually happened.[3] This is evident also from the fact that Al-Bayḥaqî gives the report through the same Mas'ûdî in which this portion does not occur.[4]

Secondly, even taking the *Musnad's* text as it is, it can in no way be shown that the Prophet had slaughtered the animal and prepared the meal. In fact none of the different versions gives such an impression. On the contrary the wordings as well as the tenor of the various versions show clearly that the meal was prepared by the others and presented by them to the Prophet and his companion. And as regards the question of eating of the meal, the correct and reliable report given by Bukhârî says that once Zayd ibn 'Amr ibn Nufayl happened to meet the Prophet before his call to Prophethood, at Baldah (near Makka), when such a meal was presented to the Prophet. He refused to partake of it; so did Zayd ibn 'Amr, adding: "I do not eat what you people slaughter on the altars, etc."[5] Obviously this expresion of Zayd's, which was a sequel to the Prophet's earlier refusal to partake of the meal and which Zayd made when he was in turn offered the meal, has been mixed up by some of the narrators and made to appear as though he was the person who first declined to eat of the meal.[6] That things have been mixed up is cleary illustrated also by the fact that in one version of this report the same group of narrators add to their narration that the Prophet, while running between Ṣafâ and Marwah strictly asked Zayd ibn Ḥârithah, his adopted son who was with him, not to go near nor touch the two idols, 'Îsâf and Nâ'ilah, posted at those two places and which the other Makkans were wont to touch

6. *Ibid.* See also Al-Dhahabî, *Siyar 'A'lâm al-Nubalâ'*, I, p. 222.

1. Al-Ṭabarânî, *op.cit.*, V, p. 86 n.

2. *Ibid.*

3. Muḥibb Allah Shâh, quoted in Al-Ṭabarânî, *op.cit.*, I, p. 151 n. See also Nâṣir al-Dîn al-Albânî's comment in Muḥammad al-Ghazâlî's *Fiqh al-Sîrah*, 7th impression, 1986, pp. 86-87n.

4. Al-Bayhaqî, *Dalâ'il etc.*, II, first impression, Beirut, 1985 / 1405. pp. 123-124.

5. *Bukhârî*, no. 3826. The text runs as follows:

(حدثني... أن النبي ﷺ لقي زيد بن عمرو بن نفيل بأسفل بلدح قبل أن ينزل على النبي ﷺ الوحي فقدمت إلى النبي ﷺ سفرة فأبى أن يأكل منه، ثم قال زيد: إني لست آكلُ مما تذبحون على أنصابكم...)

6. See for comments on this report *Fatḥ al-Bârî*, VIII, third impression, pp. 176-178 and IX, pp. 630-631.

while making the ritual runs there. Evidently the intention of the narrators was to emphasize that the Prophet steered clear of idolatry even before his call to Prophethood. Again, the same group of narrators report this latter incident as a separate narration without alluding to the incident of the meal.[1]

Thus a comparison and collation of the various versions of the report shows that neither did the Prophet slaughter the animal and prepare the meal, nor did he partake of it; although the mere partaking of such food, like marrying within the prohibited degrees, would not be regarded improper before the orders of prohibition were revealed respecting these two matters. On the other hand one version of the report in *Bukhârî*, which is unquestionably the more reliable, categorically states that the Prophet was the first person to decline the meal. Also, two other versions of the report from the same group of narrators emphasize, in addition, that the Prophet strictly avoided the idols placed at Ṣafâ and Marwah while making runs between those places. It is also obvious from the different versions that the reported meeting between Zayd ibn 'Amr and the Prophet took place not long before the latter's call to Prophethood when his religious attitude, particularly his attitude towards idolatry, must have taken definite shape, specially as we know that he emphatically stated to his wife at an obviously early stage of their conjugal life that he had never worshipped Al-Lât and Al-'Uzzâ.[2] Clearly at that juncture of time to which the report under discussion relates the Prophet was in no need to be "inspired" for the frist time by Zayd ibn 'Amr and his like to detest the idols and to avoid meats dedicated to them.

Lastly, with regard to Margoliouth's remark noted at (e) above, namely, that the Prophet had not much of physical repugnance to idolatry because he retained in Islam the practice of kissing the Black Stone. In making this remark Margoliouth has fallen into three errors, namely, (a) an error about the original nature of the Black Stone; (b) an error about what he calls the Prophet's yearning for kissing it and (c) an error about the purpose and object of the practice of kissing / touching it.

There are a number of traditions about the origin of the Black Stone.[3]

1. Cf. Al-Dhahabî, *Siyar 'A'lâm al-Nubalâ'*, I, pp. 220-221 and his *Al-Sîrat al-Nabawiyyah*, *op.cit*, pp. 81, 87-88; and Al-Ṭabarânî, *op.cit.*, V, pp. 86-87 (Nos. 4663 and 4665).

2. *Supra*, 196.

3. See for instance Musnad, I, 307, 329, 373; II, 213, 214; III, 277; *Tirmidhî*, nos. 877, 878; *Nasâ'î*, no. 2935. See also Muḥammad Tayyib al-Najjâr, *Al-Qawl al-Mubîn Fî Sîrat* =

According to Ibn al-'Athîr, Prophet Ibrâhim, while erecting the Ka'ba, obtained the stone from the nearby mountain of 'Abu Qubays and placed it in one corner of the Ka'ba so that it might become the starting and finishing point of circumambulating (*ṭawâf*) the House.[1] Although this statement of Ibn al-'Athîr's does not really explain the origin of the stone it nonetheless informs us how and why Prophet Ibrâhîm got it and used it. Throughout the succeeding ages this nature and purpose of the Black Stone has never been lost sight of. Following the Abrahamic tradition the pre-Islamic inhabitants of Makka and other Arabs used to start their circumambulation of the House from the point of the Black Stone and kiss it. But there is nothing in the sources to suggest that they worshipped it along with their goddesses or considered it as having any divine attribute or possessing any power of doing good or evil. Nor is there any hint that the act of kissing constituted a form of worship or a rite connected with the worship of idols. The kissing of the Black Stone was for the Arabs a sort of national institution signifying their identity with the Abrahamic tradition, never an act of idolatrous worship. Hence the suggestion that the retention of the practice is a remnant of idolatry is simply a misinterpretation of its origin and nature.

Secondly, Margoliouth's reference to the Prophet's alleged "yearning" for kissing the Black Stone is indeed a twisting of the facts. After the *hijrah* the Prophet did indeed yearn for making *'umrah* and *ḥajj*; but that is not the same thing as saying that he yearned merely for kissing the Black Stone or viewed it as an object of devotion or adoration.

Thirdly, the same practice of starting and finishing *ṭawâf* of the Ka'ba from the point of the Black Stone as established by Ibrâhîm has been retained in Islam. Indeed the *ḥajj* and *'umrah* are a continuation of the Abrahamic tradition in Islam. This tradition has nothing to do with idolatrous worship. It is an essential condition of correct performance of *ḥajj* and *'umrah* that the Ka'ba should be circumambulated; it is also an essential condition that the act of circumambulating should be started and finished at the point of the Black Stone. The touching and kissing of it is not an absolute requisite for *ḥajj* or *'umrah*. The Prophet himself sometimes kissed it, sometimes he did not. The act of kissing is done by way of showing one's love

= *Sayyid al-Mursalin*, Riyadh, 1981, pp. 21-26 where the various traditions have been quoted and discussed.

1. Ibn al-Athîr, *Al-Kâmil etc.*, I, p. 82.

and feeling for the Ka'ba, the centre which imparts a sense of direction for the entire Muslim community. The kissing of the Black Stone is only an expression of that sense of unity and adhesion to the great family and brotherhood which traces its origin to Ibrâhîm. Not a single Muslim could be found who thinks he worships the Black Stone, or regards it as possessing any power of bestowing a benefit or causing any harm. A Muslim worships neither the Black Stone nor the Ka'ba, but the Lord Alone of it and of the universe. The practice concerning the Black Stone is neither a fetish nor a remnant of idolatry.

Margoliouth has been followed in his arguments and conclusions by many a subsequent writer. Mention may be made, however, of Arthur Jeffery who, some quarter of a century after the appearance of Margoliouth's work, harnessed the orientalists' arguments on this question in an article captioned: "Was Muḥammad a Prophet from his infancy."[1] Jeffery starts with the observation that the whole question of Muḥammad's (ﷺ) immunity from idolatry in his early life is "an exceedingly foolish one", for it is "obvious to any instructed intelligence that every prophet before his call has followed the religion of his people, and that an infant prophet would be psychologically a monstrosity."[2] Thus castigating the Muslim attitude on the subject Jeffery forestalls the objections that might be raised to the traditions he cites by saying that the Muslim criticism of tradition concerned itself "solely with the examination of the *sanad*" and paid "very little attention to the *matn* or substance of tradition itself"; but attention to the latter yields "astonishingly fruitful results". Hence modern scholarship treats concentration on *isnâd* alone as worthless. He further says that as in the cases of Jesus, Buddha or even Alexander, there grew an idealizing tendency in the case of Muḥammad (ﷺ) too at a subsequent period giving rise to many such traditions. "It is thus precisely those traditions which are farthest from this idealizing tendency which are *a priori* the most likely to be genuine." For, these could not have been invented "after the idealizing process had started" and they would in all likelihood have been suppressed at that time "had they not been old and unquestionably authentic."[3] He further says that the Qur'ânic passage 93: 6-7 shows that Allah found Muḥammad (ﷺ) "in a false reli-

1. MW., XX, 1930, 226-234.
2. *Ibid.*, 226.
3. *Ibid.*, 227-228.

gion" and then guided him to the true one and that his whole attitude in the Qur'ân is that of a man who has forsaken the old religion of his people and is pressing on them the necessity of embracing a new and better religion. Jeffery then enumerates the following six reasons in support of his view.

(i) In his *Kitâb al-Bad' wa al-Târîkh* Al-Maqdisî gives a tradition on the authority of Qatâdah[1] which says that the first son whom Khadîjah (r.a.) "bore to the Prophet in the *Jâhiliyya* was named by him 'Abd Manâf, i,e, Servant of Manâf". *Manâf* was the name of an ancient and at one time important idol of Makka. And since Muḥammad (ﷺ) "after his assumption of the prophetic office" took care to change "the names of those of his followers which were reminiscent of the old paganism", it is obvious "that he would not have named his first-born 'Abd Manâf had he been at that time following the 'religion of Abraham' which he later professed".[2]

(ii) Prior to his prophethood he married three of his daughters to three idolatrous husbands (two to 'Abû Lahab's two sons and the eldest to 'Abû al-'Âṣ ibn Rabî'); and at that time "there was no consciousness on the part of anyone of any difference between the religion of Muḥammad and that of his Meccan contemporaries."[3]

(iii) Referring to the Prophet's arbitration in setting the Black Stone to its place at the time of the rebuilding of the Ka'ba Jeffery says that the fact that Muḥammad (ﷺ) took part in the rebuilding of the Ka'ba, the "House of that al-Lât, al-'Uzzâ and Manât" against whom he later "fulminated in the Qur'ân" shows that he was then "following peacefully the religion of his people."[4]

(iv) Jeffery cites the tradition in the *Musnad* (iv, 222), already referred to by Margoliouth, which speaks of a neighbour's overhearing the Prophet's statement to his wife refusing to worship Al-Lât and Al-'Uzzâ, and the neighbour's remark: "Those were the idols which they used to worship, and then go to bed". Jeffery adds his own reasons for supporting Margoliouth's interpretation of the tradition.[5] These reasons will be considered presently.

(v) Jeffery also cites the tradition in the *Musnad* (i, 189), also cited earlier

1. Jeffery writes "al-Qatada" which is a mistake. The name is is simply Qatâdah.
2. Jeffery, *op. cit.*, 228-229.
3. *Ibid.*, 229-230
4. *Ibid.*, 230-231.
5. *Ibid.*, 231-232.

by Margoliouth, purporting to show that Zayd ibn 'Amr ibn Nufayl inspired the Prophet to abandon eating meat offered to idols.[1] Jeffery adds his own reasons which will be discussed presently.

(vi) Finally, Jeffery cites also the tradition, mentioned earlier by Margoliouth, which purports to show that the Prophet once offered a sheep to Al-'Uzzâ.[2]

It may be noted that the first in this series of arguments is only a documentation of Margoliouth's statement about the idolatrous nature of the names of some of the Prophet's children. The argument at (iii) about the Prophet's role in the resetting of the Black Stone is also somewhat an extension of Margoliouth's remarks about the Black Stone. And the points enumerated at (iv), (v) and (vi) are a reiteration of those mentioned by Margoliouth. Thus the only additional argument which may be said to be essentially Jeffery's own is that at (ii). But since he adduces his own reasons to strengthen all these points, all of them will be taken into consideration one by one. Before doing so, however, it would be worthwhile to examine a little closely Jeffery's preliminary remarks.

It may be noted at the outset that Jeffery somewhat inflates the proposition in order to make out his case. Muslims do never claim that Muḥammad (ﷺ)was a Prophet since his infancy, as Jeffery puts it, nor do they say that the Prophet followed since his boyhood the religion of Abraham. They only say that the Prophet was free from the stain of polytheism (*shirk*) even in his pre-prophetic life. This is not the same thing as saying that he was a Prophet "from" his infancy. Again, Jeffery's statement that it is "sufficiently obvious to any instructed intelligenece that every prophet before his call followed the religion of his people" is arguable. Nor is it at all "foolish" to think of a person, even though born and brought up amidst a certain religious environment, not practising the religious rites of that religious system. Such could be more easily the case where, as in the Makkan tribal society, the performance of religious rites was more in the nature of a communal exercise than of personal practice. Indeed in such a society non-participation in the communal religious functions by any individual would be rather a passive and unobtrusive attitude on his part than any noticeable disruption in the socio-religious system. Instances are not wanting of "non-practising Chris-

1. *Ibid.*, 232-233.
2. *Ibid.*, 233-234.

tians", for instance, in a Christian society. And if enquiries are made about what exactly such "non-practising" individuals believe in, many of them would be found to be in an intellectual vacuum or are atheists or marxists, though they generally pass off as normal members of their respective religious communities.

The matter goes beyond this, however. It is very obvious to any instructed intelligence that in the case of many a great man the signs of his subsequent greatness were discernible even in his very early life. And in so far as a great religious figure is concerned it is not at all unlikely that God sets his mind in the right direction from his boyhood. Enquiries made with persons newly embracing a monotheistic religion but previously belonging to another religious community reveal that in many cases they had developed an abhorrence of the polytheistic practices of their communities and avoided those practices since an early stage of their lives. The present writer interviewed a young Bengali Hindu convert to Islam studying at the Madina Islamic University. He stated that he began to dislike and avoid the worship of idols when he was 8 or 9 years of age, embraced Islam when he was about 12 years, left home, travelled to Pakistan with the help of a benfactor and after finishing his secondary education there joined the Madina Islamic University and graduated this year (1991).[1] Another young convert to Islam, formerly belonging to a Christian family at Leicester, England, who also studied for some time at the Madina Islamic University, related to the writer a similar story of his early abstinence from the Christian forms of worship. The idea of a boy belonging to a polytheistic society yet not practising polytheism is thus not at all "foolish" as Jeffery so confidently asserts.

His statement about the nature of Muslim criticistn of tradition also is untenable. The Muslim criticism was not concerned "solely" with the examination of *isnâd*; and even if that was so, that is no justification for a total dispensing with the examination of the authority on which a particular tradition purports to be based, as the orientalists seem to do. The accusation originally made by Muir and since then echoed by many including Jeffery that there was a proneness on the part of the Muslim authorities of old to suppress any report derogatory to their Prophet is absolutely unjustifiable. There never was any attempt to suppress anything. On the contrary, the attempt

1. The convert's name is Muḥammad Ṣafiullah (his previous name was Paresh Chandra Sil), son of Sri Sukumar Chandra Sil, of village Gabua, P.O. Mankaran, Badarpur, Dist. Patuakhali.

was to collect and preserve anything and everything that was available and in circulation. In fact there could be no attempt as such to suppress anything; for the writing down or circulation of traditions was no centralized affair and there could conceivably be no machinery to prevent an individual from writing down and transmitting a report or information he cared to collect. *Suppression* of anything under the circumstances was out of the question. It was because of this absence of any plan or feasibility to supervise and control the issuance of tradition, and because it was found that many spurious traditions were put in circulation by interested parties that the Muslim traditionists were led of necessity to formulate criteria to distinguish the genuine from the spurious traditions. The sheer historical fact is that there was no means of controlling the issuance of traditions while there was an abundance and unbridled growth of spurious traditions. The emphasis on *isnâd* is an outcome of this historical fact; and it is this fact which makes it absolutely necessary to strictly examine especially those very traditions that seem to run counter to the generally accepted facts about the Prophet's life or supply contradictory and inconsistent information on any particular point.

On the basically faulty assumption that there was a proneness on the part of the Muslims to suppress any report discreditable to their Prophet the orientalists generally go to the opposite extreme of exhibiting a proneness on their part to treat as genuine anything that appears to reflect discreditably on the Prophet. Jeffery's statement that the traditions which are farthest from the idealizing tendency are *a priori* the most likely to be genuine is symptomatic of this attitude. Even the existence of an idealizing tendency and the likelihood of the opposite type of traditions being genuine do not by themselves constitute sufficient grounds for doing away with any critical examination of the latter in respect of both *isnad* and other aspects. After all, Muslims do not readily accept the so-called idealizing traditions on the face of them without subjecting them to any test. That a little careful examination of the traditions cited by Jeffery in support of his view, in respect of both *isnâd* and *matn*, reveals their weaknesses and the hazard in treating them as conclusive on the points at issue would be seen presently.

Jeffery's first evidence is the report of Qatâdah noted by Al-Maqdisî[1] and relating to the name of the Prophet's first son born of Khadîjah (r.a.). It is

1. Muṭahhar ibn Ṭâhir al-Maqdisî (d. 355 H.), *Kitâb al-Bad' wa al-Târîkh*, ed. Huart, Paris, 1899, reprinted Beirut, 1916, p. 139.

defective in many ways. This Qatâdah (ibn Di'âmah, d. 117/118 H.) is generally considered a deceptive (*mudallis*) narrator who, it is further on record, quoted some thirty different persons as his informants but from whom he had never heard anything.[1] In the present instance it is not even mentioned from whom he received this particular information. More important still, there is a gap of about two hundred years between Al-Maqdisî (d.355 H.) and Sa'îd ibn 'Abî 'Urûbah (d.156/157 H.) who is said to have received the information from Qatâdah. Yet Al-Maqdisî does not mention how or through which sources he received the latter's report. This is all the more remarkable because he mentions the *book* of Ibn Isḥâq as the source while saying that the latter's statement on the subject differs from that of Sa'îd ibn 'Abî 'Urûbah.[2] Apart from this consideration of the *isnâd*, the text itself exhibits its weakness. Al-Maqdisî writes: "According to a report of Sa'îd ibn 'Abî 'Urûbah from Qatâdah she (Khadîjah, r.a.) gave birth to 'Abd Manâf for the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) in the *Jâhiliyyah* and she gave birth for him in Islâm to two sons and four daughters, Al-Qâsim and 'Abd Allah, and these two died in their childhood. And in the book of Ibn Isḥâq it is stated that his two sons died in the *Jâhiliyyah*."[3]

Now, the most important thing to note about this text is that while it specifically states that the two sons, Al-Qâsim and 'Abd Allah, who are said to have been born in Islam, died in their childhood, it does not say what happened to the alleged 'Abd Manâf who is said to have been born before them in the *Jâhiliyyah*. The emphasis laid on the death in childhood of the two other sons implies that the so-called 'Abd Manâf did not so die. But history does not know of any son for the Prophet attaining age or surviving him. Hence the statement in the report is clearly a mistake or confusion on the part of the person who made or transmitted it.

That there has been some confusion or mistake appears all the clearer from the fact that in the *Sîrat Mughalṭây*[4] it is unequivocally stated that Khadîjah (r.a.) gave birth to a son named 'Abd Manâf (or 'Abd Allah) for

1. *Tahdhîb al-Tahdhîb*, VIII, 351-356, especially p. 356.
2. See the next note.
3. Al-Maqdisî, *op. cit.*, 139. The Arabic text runs as follows:

(وفي رواية سعيد بن أبي عروبة عن قتادة أنها ولدت لرسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم عبد مناف في الجاهلية وولدت له في الإسلام غلامين وأربع بنات القاسم وعبدالله فماتا صغيرين وفي كتاب ابن إسحاق أن ابنيه هلكا في الجاهلية وأن بناته أدركن الإسلام وهاجرن والله أعلم)

4. Al-Ḥâfiz 'Alâ' al-Dîn Mughalṭây ibn Qulayz (d. 726), *Sîrat Mughalṭây*, Cairo print, 1326 H., p. 12.

her first husband 'Atîq ibn 'Â'id.[1] The report under consideration appears to have confused this 'Abd Manâf as the Prophet's first son, because he subsequently married Khadîjah (r.a.). It may also be noted in this connection that Ibn 'Asâkir (d. 571) quotes a report from the same Qatâdah which says that only four sons were born to the Prophet of whom the eldest was named Al-Qâsim.[2] In this report there is no mention of 'Abd Manâf at all.

Thus, to sum up, the report given by Al-Maqdisî on the supposed authority of Qatâdah does not agree with another of the same Qatâdah's report on the same subject cited by Ibn 'Asâkir. Secondly, there is no mention of Qatâdah's informants nor does Al-Maqdisî mention how he received the report said to have been transmitted by Sa'îd ibn 'Abî 'Urûbah who had died about a couple of centuries before him. Thirdly, the report implies that the alleged 'Abd Manâf did not die in childhood while the other two sons of the Prophet did so. But history does not record any son of the Prophet attaining maturity or surviving him. Fourthly, Al-Maqdisî's information is in conflict with that given by all the earlier authorities including Ibn Isḥâq. It would be both arbitrary and unfair to assume that all those earlier authorities were parties to suppressing such an important fact relating to the Prophet as the existence and name of another son for him. Last but not least, if there was an eldest son other than Al-Qâsim, the Prophet's *kunya* would have been "'Abû so-and-so" instead of 'Abû al-Qâsim, for the *kunya* of a person was invariably after his first-born child. Even Al-Maqdisî notes that 'Abû al-Qâsim was the Prophet's *kunya*.[3] For all these reasons the report under discussion is not at all credible.[4]

1. See also Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Diyâr Bakrî (d. 966 H.) *Târîkh al-Khamîs*, Part I., Beirut, n. d, p.263.

2. Ibn 'Asâkir, quoted in Mughalṭây, *Al-Zahr al-Bâsim*, MSS. Leiden Univ. Or. 370 (photocopy with the Madina Islamic University), fol. 96.

3. Al-Maqdisî, *op. cit.*

4. It may be noted here that there is another such report emanating from Hishâm ibn 'Urwah (d. 145 / 146 H.) which says that Khadîjah (r.a) gave birth for the Prophet to two sons before Islam, named respectively 'Abd al-Uzzâ and Al-Qâsim but both of them died before the coming of Islam. (Bukhârî, *Al-Târîkh al-Ṣaghîr*, ed. Maḥmûd Ibrâhîm Zâyd, Part I, Cairo, 1397 / 1977, p. 4). This report too is incredible on the grounds that it is technically *mu'ḍal*, i.e., more than one of its narrators previous to Hishâm ibn 'Urwah are missing, while some of the others subsequent to him, like Ismâ'îl (ibn 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abd Allah ibn 'Uways) is not dependable (see *Tahdhîb al-Tahdhîb*, I., pp. 310-312, No. 568).

Jeffery's second argument that the Prophet, before his call, had married three of his daughters to three idolatrous husbands without anyone noticing at the time any difference in his faith is equally ineffective. There was no prohibition in pre-Islamic Arab society on marriages between persons or families of different religious persuasions. That prohibition in Islam came much later on. Previously to that development such marriages took place in the Arabian society without any noticeable objection being raised or any qulams of conscience being exhibited by any quarter. For instance, the Yathribite leader Ka'b ibn al-Ashraf's mother was a Jewess of Banû al-Naḍîr, while his father, Ashraf, was a polytheist of Banû al-Nabhân.[1] Similarly, though Zayd ibn 'Amr ibn Nufayl was a monotheist (*ḥanîf*) not practising polytheism, no one objected to his son Sa'îd being married to the polytheist Al-Khaṭṭâb's daughter ('Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭâb's sister) Fâṭimah before the coming of Islam. Again, Waraqah ibn Nawfal, though a monotheist and a Christian, did not find any difficulty in living peacefully and as a normal member of his polytheistic family and clan. That 'Abû Lahab and his wife persuaded their sons to disband their marriages with the Prophet's daughters was due not really to his change as such in his religious belief, but because he openly denounced the old faith, preached a new one and summoned his people to accept it. The enmity of 'Abû Lahab and the others was excited by this latter aspect of the Prophet's activities. Had he remained silent with his own faith and not attempted to change the faith of his people, no objection would perhaps have been raised against him at all, neither by 'Abû Lahab nor by the others. Jeffery's argument ignores this fact and also the peculiar marital practices in pre-Islamic Arabia. It also fails to distinguish between the state of one's silent and unobtrusive non-observance of polytheistic practices on the one hand and the state of ones open and challenging denunciation of the popular religion coupled with the promulgation of a new faith and steps to secure converts to it, on the other.

As regards the third argument that Muḥammad (ﷺ) by his arbitration and action in resetting the Black Stone participated in rebuilding the Ka'ba, "the House of that al-Lât, al-'Uzza and Manât" against whom he "fulminated" subsequently, Jeffery is mistaken in two ways. The Ka'ba was *not* the house of Al-Lât, Al-'Uzzâ and Manât. They and their shrines were situated respectively at Ṭâ'if, Nakhala and Qudayd (near the Red Sea coast

1. Ibn Hishâm, I., 51.

between Makka and Madina) though they were revered by the Quraysh.[1] Nor was the Ka'ba at Makka sanctified and revered by the Makkans and Arabs in general as the house of their idols, though a good number of them were indeed placed in and around it. In fact a number of shrines of their idols at different places also were called *ka'bas*, such as the Ka'ba at Najran, the Ka'ba at Sindâd (between Kûfa and Baṣra)[2] and the Ka'ba al-Yamaniyyah at Dhû al-Khalaṣah.[3] In so far as the Ka'ba at Makka was concerned, however, the Arabs held it in especial esteem and ascribed to it the preeminent position not as the shrine of any particular idol or as the house of their idols in general, but as the House of Allah and because of its association with the memory of Prophets Ibrahîm and Ismâ'îl. It was also only to this Ka'ba that the Arabs, despite their lapse into idolatry, performed *'umrah* and *ḥajj* in pursuance of the Abrahamic tradition. Hence the Prophet's arbitration and action in re-setting the Black Stone to the Ka'ba was no participation in the building of an idol house, nor is it at all an evidence of his following at that time "peacefully the religion of his people."

Jeffery'a fourth plea is the report of *Musnad* (iv, 222) which Margoliouth cites and which speaks of a neighbour's overhearing the Prophet's conversation with Khadijah in which he (the Prophet) refused to worship Al-Lât and Al-'Uzzâ. The faulty nature of Margoliouth's conclusion on this report, particularly the grammatical objections to applying the neighbour's remark "those were the idols which they used to worship and then go to bed", to the Prophet and his wife, have been shown above.[4] Jeffery attempts to support Margoliouth's conclusion in three ways: (a) He mistranslates the Prophet's statement in the report in order to make it conform to his conclusion. (b) He puts forward an excuse to avoid the grammatical objections to taking the nieghbour's remark as applying to the Prophet and his wife; and (c) he makes a few observations about the implications of the report as a whole to support his conclusion.

Jeffery translates the Prophet's statement: (أي خديجة والله لا أعبد اللات والعزى، والله لا أعبد أبدا) as: "Oh Khadîjah: by Allah, I will not worship al-Lât nor al-

1. See Ibn Hishâm, I., 83-85; Ibn al-Kalbî, *Kitâb al-Aṣnâm*, pp. 13, 16, 44; Yâqût, *Mu'jam al-Buldân*, IV, 16; V, 4, 204.

2. Ibn al-Kalbî, *Kitâb al-Aṣnâm*, 44-45; Ibn Hishâm, I. 83.

3. *Bukhârî*, nos. 4355, 4356, 4357.

4. *Supra*, pp. 196-200.

'Uzzâ: by Allah I will not perform worship again."[1] This translation is faulty in three ways. In the first place, he renders the verb *lâ 'a'budu* (لا أعبد) in both places of the statement in the future tense which is contrary to the grammatical rules. It is to be noted that in this statement the verb *'a'budu* (أعبد) is used twice and both in the imperfect (*muḍâri'* مضارع) form. In Arabic this form is used to mean either the present (*ḥâl* حال) or the future (*mustaqbal* مستقبل) tense. But the general rule is that where in the same statement the verb occurs twice in the same *muḍâri'* form, the first use is to be taken in the present tense (حال) and the second in the future (مستقبل) tense. In addition to this general rule, this is to be so specially and invariably when there are clear indications that the second use of the verb has to be taken in the future tense. In the statement under reference, the verb *'a'budu* in the second place, is followed by the expression *'abadan* (أبدا) which unmistakably indicates that here the verb is in the future tense. The first use of the verb in the statement must therefore be taken to be in the present tense (حال). On these simple rules the correct translation of the Prophet's statement: (... والله لا أعبد اللات والعزى، والله لا أعبد أبدا) would be: "By Allah, I do not worship Al-Lât and Al-'Uzzia; by Allah, I will never worship (them)." The verb in the first instance must be taken in the sense of a simple present tense because in the second instance it is earmarked as the future tense by using *'abadan* (أبدا) with it. And as it cannot be assumed that the Prophet was simply saying that he was at the moment not engaged in the act of worshipping those idols, the first half of the statement must be taken to be an assertion of his habit and practice and the second half as an emphatic refusal to do so in future. In other words the Prophet stated that it was not his practice to worship those idols nor would he ever worship them.

The second fault in Jeffery's translation is his disregard or side-tracking of the meaning of *lâ...'abadan* (لا ... أبدا) which stands for "never". Instead of correctly rendering the meaning of this expression Jeffery imports, and this is the third fault of the translation, the word "again" here, translating the clause as: "I will not perform worship again". The use of *lâ* with *'abadan* in Arabic invariably means "never"; never does the expression mean again". Jeffery makes this three-fold incorrect translation—rendering the verbs in the future tense in both places, side-tracking the meaning of *lâ..'abadan* and importing "again" in its stead—obviously to imply that while the Prophet

1. Jeffery, *op. cit.*, 231.

used previously to worship those idols, he now asserted that he would henceforth not do so "again". Such a meaning is totally unjustified by the text.

In addition to this twisting in the translation of the text Jeffery advances an excuse to circumvent the grammatical objections to applying the last sentence of the report, the neighbour's remark, "These were the idols which they used to worship, and then go to bed" to the Prophet and his wife by saying that a modern writer is likely to be meticulous in his use of duals and plurals "but anciently it was not so." He further says that the whole tradition would be pointless "if it does not refer to the household of Muḥammad and Khadîja, and if pressed we could always argue that the plural is used to include the family."[1]

The excuse offered by Jeffery to disregard the grammatical objections is simply poor and unacceptable. The narrators of traditions do not at all appear to be such weaklings in Arabic usage as to be careless about the rules regarding duals and plurals in verbs. Jeffery himself betrays an awareness of the weakness of his position when he says: "if pressed we could always argue that the plural is used to include the family." Yes, the plural is used for the family, i.e. Khadîjah's parental family or the Quraysh family in general, not the family constituted by Khadîjah and her husband on their marriage.

And this in fact brings us to Jeffery's observations about the implications of the tradition in general. He says that the tradition raises the veil from Muḥammad's (ﷺ) domestic life for a moment and that it comes from that period in his "spiritual development when he was beginning to feel the futility of idol worship" either under the influence of "the purer religion around him" or "of those shadowy persons the Ḥanîfs".[2]

The tradition might be raising the veil for a moment from the domestic life of Muḥammad (ﷺ); but it does *not* come from the period of his supposed particular spiritual development under the influences mentioned. For if the Prophet, after having worshipped the idols with Khadîjah for any length of time, had subsequently developed a new attitude towards them she would have been well aware of it and the conversation on the subject would have taken a different form. At least Khadîjah would not have cut short of the subject by saying "leave that Al-Lât, leave that Al-'Uzzâ" and would rather have sought some explanation for her husband's new attitude. Nor

1. *Ibid.*, 232.
2. *Ibid.*, 231.

would the Prophet have replied in the manner he did but would have used some other words indicating the reason for his new attitude, especially as he was talking to his wife. Thus the tenor and purport of the conversation make it amply clear that it took place, if at all, at the very initial stage of their marital life when the Prophet was confronted for the first time with a situation which necessitated a statement of his attitude towards the idols. Most probably it took place when he spent the night for the first time with Khadîjah's parental family or it was the annual occasion falling for the first time after their marraige when the Quraysh used to pay homage to those idols. This explanation of the incident having taken place at the initial stage of their married life would fit in well with everything in the report. It would agree with the correct meaning of the Prophet's statement, as noted above, without the need for manipulating it in order to make it conform to a particular preconception. There would be no need to impute ignorance of grammatical knowledge to the early narrators of traditions, nor would the report be otherwise pointless, as Jeffery imagines. By all canons of consideration the report must be related to a situation at the initial stage of the Prophet's married life with Khadîjah.

In arguing that the tradition comes from a time when Muḥammad (ﷺ) began to feel the futility of idol worship Jeffery in effect admits that in so far as this particular report is concerned it shows that the Prophet henceforth did not adore the idols and ceased worshipping them. This admission, together with the fact that the incident must have taken place not very long after the Prophet's marriage with Khadîjah, invalidate Jeffery's three previous arguments too. For, when it is recognized that the Prophet saw the futility of idol worship and ceased doing so at least since an early stage of his married life, it cannot consistently be argued that he nonetheless named his children, when born, after the idols; nor that he, by his arbitration in resetting the Black Stone to the Ka'ba only five years prior to his call to Prophetood, participated in building a house for the idols; nor that he was still a polytheist when he gave his daughters in marriage to polytheists!

As regards the remaining two points (e & f), namely the tradition regarding Zayd ibn 'Amr ibn Nufayl's refusal to partake of meat offered to idols and the tradition which alleges that the Prophet once offered a grey sheep to Al-'Uzzâ, Jeffery does not add any new argument or observation. These two traditions have already been discussed in detail;[1] so no further discussion of

1. *Supra*, pp. 197-201.

them is called for.

Before concluding this chapter reference should be made to the views of Watt on this subject. He seems to have drawn on the views of his predecessors and made an amalgam of them. Broadly three specific lines of thought, all of them being of his predecessors, may be identified in his treatment of the subject. He seems to have accepted as an established fact the view that prior to his call to Prophethood Muḥammad (ﷺ) was more or less an idolator. He also adopts the view that the "vague monotheism" prevalent in Arabia on the eve of the rise of Islam, specially the rise of the *ḥanîfs,* was due to the influence of Judaism and Christianity and that Muḥammad (ﷺ) was not quite untouched by that monotheism. Thirdly and more specifically, Watt adopts the view of his preceptor R. Bell who, on the basis of what he considers the message of the early passages of the Qur'ân suggests that even for the first few years of his Prophethood Muḥammad (ﷺ) did not openly speak against the other gods but simply sought to stimulate gratitude to God by stressing his "goodness" and bounty.[1]

Watt incorporates all these lines of thought and suggests that the Prophet did not totally break away from idolatry till the incident of "the Satanic verses" and their abrogation. Deprecating the Muslim scholars' lack of understanding of what he calls the "modern Western concept of gradual development" in the case of Muḥammad's (ﷺ) religious ideas Watt writes: "The truth is that his monotheism was originally, like that of his more enlightened contemporaries, somewhat vague, and in particular was not so strict that the recognition of inferior beings was felt to be incompatible with it. He probably regarded al-Lât, al-'Uzzâ, and Manât as celestial beings of a lower grade than God, in much the same way as Judaism and Christianity have recognized the existence of angels."[2] Earlier, speaking about "what preceded Muḥammad's call and first revelation" Watt writes: "In religion his outlook was presumably the vague monotheism found among the most enlightened Meccans, but in addition he must have looked for some kind of reform in Mecca".[3] While writing these lines Watt, by his own admission,[4] was not so aware as he subsequently became that the concept of Allah as the

1. R. Bell, "The Beginning of Muḥammad's Religious Activities" *T.G.U.O.S.*, VII, 16-24, specially p. 20.

2. Watt, ***Muhammad at Mecca***, 104.

3. ***Ibid.***, 44.

4. Watt, ***Muḥammad's Mecca***, Edinburgh, 1988, Preface, VII.

Supreme Being was prevalent in pre Islamic Arabia. Hence in his latest work he somewhat modifies his statement as follows:[1]

"To judge from the witness of the Qur'ân to pre-Islamic religion and from the story of the Satanic verses Muḥammad's original belief may have been in Allah as 'high god' or supreme deity, combined with the lesser local deities whom he may have come to regard as angels who could intercede with the supreme being. There is even a report that he said that he had once sacrificed a sheep to al-'Uzzâ."

These remarks of Watt relate more pointedly to the early phase of Muḥammad's (ﷺ) activities as Prophet. They have therefore been discussed fully a little later on in that connection.[2] Here it may only be pointed out that the remarks are not quite compatible with the theory of gradual development of which Watt is so much cognizant. In the first place, he suggests that prior to his call to Prophethood Muḥammad's (ﷺ) outlook in religion was the "vague monotheism found among the most enlightened Meccans". At the same time Watt states that Muḥammad (ﷺ) spoke only about vague monotheism together with recognition of the lesser gods till the so-called affair of the "Satanic verses," i.e., for upto 3-4 years of his role as Prophet. This is simply inconsistent with the concept of gradual development. For Muḥammad's emergence as Prophet must have been marked by something new and better on his part than what was already known. None would have paid any special attention to him and become his follower if his ideas were not clearly in advance of those of the enlightened Makkans. Secondly, by "the most enlightened Meccans" Watt evidently means the *ḥanîfs*; but he simply confuses when he says that their monotheism "was not so strict that the recognition of inferior beings was felt to be incompatible with it." The monotheism of those enlightened persons, the *ḥanîfs*, might have been vague, but it was clearly and unmistakably a reaction to and a break with the prevalent idolatry. It was neither an off-shoof of idolatry nor did it in any way recognize the efficacy of the "inferior beings". Watt misstates the position of the *ḥanîfs* in order to transfer that position to the Prophet, both of which manoeuvres are not in accord with the concept of gradual development, neither in respect of the *ḥanîfs* nor in respect of the Prophet. Thirdly, the last sentence of Watt's above quoted statement refers to the tradition about the Prophet's having allegedly once offered a sheep to Al-'Uzzâ which Watt's predecessors also cite along with some other reports. This

1. *Ibid.*, 49.
2. *Infra*, chapter XXIII.

report, as shown earlier, is spurious and not worthy of credence.[1] But leaving aside that question, even the text of the report as it is refers obviously to a stage long prior to Muḥammad's (ﷺ) call. While citing this report Watt's predecessors, particularly Jeffery, at least recognizes that prior to his call Muḥammad's (ﷺ) religious attitude underwent a change so much so that he unequivocally refused, while speaking to his wife, to worship Al-Lât and Al-'Uzzâ. Watt's citation of the report by way of substantiating the assertion that the Prophet continued to recognize Al-Lât and Al-'Uzzâ even after his receipt of the call is thus both anachronistic and inconsitent with the others' theory of gradual development. It is also tendentially selective in that Watt does not at all refer to the other report concerning the Prophet's refusal to worship Al-Lât and Al-'Uzzâ which Watt's predecessors specifically note.

1. *Supra*, pp. 197-199.

CHAPTER IX

WATT'S THEORY ABOUT THE *ḤARB AL-FIJÂR* AND THE *ḤILF AL-FUḌÛL*

Watt advances a new theory about the *Ḥarb al-Fijâr* and the *Ḥilf al-Fuḍûl*, the two most notable events in Makka's socio-political life during the Prophet's adolescence and early youth. It has already been noted that Watt assumes a prolonged trade rivalry between two groups of the Quraysh clans. In explaining the *Ḥarb al-Fijâr* and the *Ḥilf al-Fuḍûl* he extends that rivalry to the sphere of their international relations and international trade. He says that there was not only a prolonged trade rivalry between two groups of the Quraysh clans themselves but also between their supposedly stronger group on the one hand and Ḥîrah-Persia in the north and Yaman in the south on the other, relating this rivalry with the wider conflict between the Byzantine and the Persian empires over imperial, commercial and religious interests. The *Fijâr* wars, according to Watt, were the results of that trade rivalry between the stronger Quraysh clans and Ḥîrah-Persia. In this context he further states:

(a) that the *Ḥilf al-Fuḍûl* was "a later development of the Muṭayyabûn", i.e., of the so-called weaker clans, "and not a general league against injustice";[1]

(b) that it was directed against the stronger clans like 'Abd Shams and Nawfal;[2]

(c) and that it represented an attempt by the weaker group to prevent the stronger group of clans from monopolizing the international trade in their hands.[3]

The following is a brief discussion on these assumptions of Watt's.

The general international situation, particulary the rivalry between the Byzantine and the Persian empire is well-known and it has been treated by many a previous scholar in relating the background to the rise of Islam;[4] but the conclusions drawn from this situation by Watt about the relationship between the Quraysh clans themselves are both novel and untenable. He says

1. Watt, *M. at M.*, 6.
2. *Ibid.*, 6, 15, 32.
3. *Ibid.*, 12-15.
4. See for instance P.K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs* (first edn. 1937). Chaps. IV & V.

that after the death of Justinian (565 A.C) the struggle between the Byzantine and the Persian empires "entered its final phase" and that by 570 or 575 the Persians drove out the Abyssinians, who were allied with the Byzantines, from "Arabia", i.e. Yaman, and established a regime there favourable to Persia, "though not strictly controlled from the metropolis."[1] Having thus said that the Persian influence thus established over Yaman was not quite effective, Watt states immediately: "By means of the Lakhmid princes of al-Ḥîrah... the Persians tried to direct the overland trade from the Yemen to Persia". And then, by way of substantiating this last statement, he adds: "The war of the Fijâr and the battle of Dhû Qâr arose out of Persian caravans from al-Ḥîrah to the Yemen."[2]

Now, it should be noted that the principality of Ḥîrah on the border of Persia was of course subordinate to the latter. But that principality was separated from Yaman by the whole expanse of the Arabian peninsula over which the Persian empire had no control whatsoever. Nor did the battle of Dhû Qâr take place out of "Persian caravans from al-Ḥîrah to the Yemen", as Watt so categorically says. It arose out of some personal differences between the Persian ruler and the prince of Ḥîrah, Nu'mân ibn Mundhir and it could at the most be regarded as yet another phase in the Persian attempts to control that principality.[3] So far as the *Fijâr* war is concerned, however, a number of facts have been twisted in Watt's above mentioned statement. In the first place, there is no indication in the sources that the caravan which Nu'mân ibn Mundhir despatched and over which the fourth *Fijâr* war broke out,[4] was sent on behalf of Persia or in her interest. Secondly, the trade caravan was sent to the 'Ukâẓ fair, near Ṭâ'if, and not towards Yaman. None of the authorities makes the slightest allusion to the caravan having been intended for that land. Thirdly, the incident which has thus been generalized as the cause of the *Fijâr* wars related to the fourth of the series of wars known as the *Fijâr* wars. The three previous wars in the series had each different causes, not at all related to the international trading activities. Fourthly, the hostile act which precipitated the fourth war was not an attack upon Nu'mân's caravan as such, nor upon any individual trader of Ḥîrah, but

1. Watt, *M. at M.*, 12.

2. *Ibid.*

3. See for details Ibn Kathîr, *Al-Kâmil Fî al-Târîkh*, ed. 'Abû al-Fidâ' 'Abd Allah al-Qâḍî, Vol. I., Beirut, 1407 / 1987, pp. 374-380; Mas 'ûdî, *Murûj etc.*, I., 278.

4. *Supra*, pp. 167-168.

upon an inhabitant of Ṭâ'if, 'Urwah, who was a personal rival of the assailant, Barrâḍ, of Makka, who was outwitted by the former in the bid for acting as "guarantor" for the caravan. Thus both the assailant and the victim were in favour of the caravan's coming to Ṭâ'if.

Thus the theory of Persia's attempt "to direct the overland route from the Yemen to Persia" is based on a number of mistaken assumptions. Its weakness is clear even from Watt's own statement made a little earlier in his work where he notes that the regime in Yaman was not quite controlled by the "metropolis", i.e., the Persian capital. The same fact is reiterated by him a couple of pages subsequently where he more clearly states: "It should be kept in mind, however, that this conquest [i.e. of Yaman by Persia] was the result of a sea-borne expedition, and that therefore the province was not firmly held, while the remainder of Arabia was not controlled by the Persians."[1] This being the real situation, how could one suggest at the same time that Persia attempted to direct the overland route from Yaman to Persia through the entire peninsula over which she had no control? If she really intended to control the import or export trade with Yaman, it would have been far less hazardous and easier for her to do so by the sea route or, if possible, by an alternative eastern Arabian coast route and not vicariously through Ḥîrah and via the western Arabian land route.

But to return to Watt's narrative. After having introduced his theory in the above mentioned way he asks in the very following paragraph of his text: "What was the position of Mecca in this struggle of the giants?" In reply he suggests that it would appear from a remark made by Ibn Qutaybah that Quṣayy, who established the supremacy of the Quraysh at Makka as against the Khuzâ'ah, did so with help received from the Ghassanids or other Byzantine allies, and that this "conquest" of Makka by Quṣayy was bound up with the development of that city's trade with Syria. "It would seem that", continues Watt, "for some time after Quṣayy the route from the Yemen to Mecca was mainly in the hands of the Yamanis; a Yamani merchant was bringing goods to Mecca at the formation of the confederacy of the Fuḍûl (C. 580). If Mecca was thus mainly concerned with the northward trade, it would be necessary to be on good terms with the Byzantines and their allies."[2]

1. Watt, *op. cit.*, 14.
2. *Ibid.*, 13.

Now, we need not find fault with the assumption of a tradition of friendship between the Byzantines and the Quraysh; nor with the latter's necessity, for the sake of the northward trade, "to be on good terms with the Byzantines and their allies". It is also understandable that the route from Yaman to Makka should be "mainly in the hands of the Yamanis". But it was not for "some time", as Watt puts it, but for over a century since Quṣayy's time, for Muḥammad (ﷺ) during whose youth the *Ḥilf al-Fuḍūl* came into being and up to which time, according to Watt, the route was in the hands of the Yamanis, was the fifth in the line of descent from Quṣayy. Also the date indicated by Watt, C. 580, as the date of the *Ḥilf*, is not correct. At the time of its formation the Prophet was a young man of more than 20 years of age and he was present at the meeting in which it was formed, which facts would place the event around 590 at the earliest.

But what is stated next by Watt is somewhat confusing. Thus by way of elucidating the Quraysh's good relationship with the Byzantines he reverts to the conquest of Yaman by the Abyssinians and stresses that since the relations between the Abyssinians and the Byzantines were friendly, it was during this period of "comparative peace that the Meccans developed their trade on a large scale and sent their caravans in all directions".[1] Having thus far advanced his theme of friendship between Makka on the one hand and the Byzantines and the Abyssinians on the other Watt finds himself confronted with the stark fact of the Abyssinian viceroy Abrahah's expedition against Makka. Hence he makes a quick modification and adds: "Relations with the Abyssinians must have deteriorated, however, for towards the end of the occupation the viceroy Abrahah led an expedition against Mecca". Why the presumed good relations with the Abyssinian regime should have detriorated is not at all indicated by Watt.

Like many others, however, Watt refers to the religious as well as commercial motives of Abrahah and then makes a very far-fetched and unjustifiable assumption with regard to ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib's negotiations with the invader saying, as noted earlier,[2] that "‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib was presumably trying to get support from the Abyssinians against his rivals among Quraysh, such as the clans of ‘Abd Shams, Nawfal, and Makhzūm. The two former of these had apparently by this time seized most of the trade with Syria and the

1. *Ibid.*
2. *Supra*, pp. 138-139.

Yemen which had formerly belonged to Hâshim and al-Muṭṭalib."[1]

Before making this last statement Watt has spoken only of the traditional friendship of Makka with the Byzantines, making particular mention that the four sons of 'Abd Manâf, namely, 'Abd Shams, Hâshim, al-Muṭṭalib and Nawfal, cultivated trade relations respectively with Abyssinia, Syria, Yaman and Iraq. He has not hitherto referred to a single fact showing the growth of a trade rivalry between the sons of Hâshim and al-Muṭṭalib on the one hand those of 'Abd Shams and Nawfal on the other. Now, all of a sudden, being confronted with the fact of Abrahah's invasion, he assumes the existence of such a situation, imputes a selfish motive to 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib in the matter of his negotiation with Abrahah and, further, on the basis of this latter assumption, proceeds to presume that the clans of 'Abd Shams and Nawfal "had apparently by this time seized most of the trade with Syria and the Yemen which had formerly belonged to Hâshim and al-Muṭṭalib." If relations with Abyssinians deteriorated leading to Abrahah's invasion, as surely they did and as Watt admits they did, how could the clans of 'Abd Shams and Nawfal at the same time seize the trade with Abyssinia and Yaman by ousting the clans of Hâshim and al-Muṭṭalib from there remains an enigma. As already shown,[2] Watt's allegation against 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib is simply untenable.

Still more confusing is the statement about the attitude of the supposedly wealthier Quraysh clans. Watt says: "Against the pro-Abyssinian policy of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib the wealthier clans would stand for a policy of neutrality, which was clearly in their best interest."[3] One would be tempted to ask: neutrality with reference to what or whom? If 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib intended, as Watt assumes, to turn the table, with Abyssinian cooperation, upon the supposedly wealthier clans, how could the latter's interest be served by their remaining neutral in the situation and thus allowing their interests to suffer by default? Again, Abrahah came to destroy the Ka'ba and the commercial importance of Makka. How could then the Makkan commercial élite, however friendly their relations with the Byzantines might have been, remain inactive or neutral in the matter? The Persians were not yet on the scene so that one could not take the neutrality to be one between those two powers. In

1. Watt, *op. cit.*, 14.
2. *Supra*, pp. 138-140.
3. Watt, *op. cit.*, 14.

fact one must confess one's inability to make any head or tail of this supposed "policy of neutrality" on the part of the clans of 'Abd Shams and others.

"Neutrality was still more necessary for Mecca", continues Watt, "after the Persian conquest of South Arabia."[1] This sentence of Watt's shows that when he speaks of neutrality in his previous paragraph he does not have the Persians in view and therefore he there implied by neutrality continuance of the traditional friendship with the Byzantines. Be that as it may, what he says next about the exact nature of the Persian position in Arabia does not really suggest any need for the Makknans to be so particular about such neutrality. For, immediately after having penned the above noted sentence Watt draws his readers' attention to the fact that the Persian influence in south Arabia was ineffective "while the remainder of Arabia was not controlled" by it so that the Makkans "made good use of this situation to consolidate their power". And by way of illustrating this latter proposition he repeats his view about the origin of the *Fijâr* war and says: "The war of the *Fijâr*, which probably began some time after the expulsion of the Abyssinians, was the result of an unprovoked attack by an ally of Mecca on a caravan from al-Ḥîrah to the Yemen by way of at-Ṭâ'if. This would mean, in economic terms, that the Meccans were trying either to close this route altogether or to ensure that they had some control over it."[2]

Thus would Watt have us believe that because of the traditional friendship with the Byzantines the Makkan commercial élite would remain "neutral", i.e., inactive, during Abrahah's attack upon their city and, when even the Persians expelled the Abyssinians from south Arabia, they (the Makkan leaders) would attempt to close or control the land route as against Ḥirah-Persia's trade with south Arabia by way of" Ṭâ'if! The most conspicuous fallacy of the assumption lies in the fact that the caravan from Ḥîrah on which the whole theory is based was not at all intended for Yaman, as already pointed out. It may be noted that while earlier (at his p. 12) Watt speaks of "Persian caravans from al-Ḥirâh to the Yemen", in the present instance he modifies his statement speaking of "a caravan from al-Ḥîrah" and adding "by way of al-Ṭâ'if" to the supposed destination, Yaman. The

1. *Ibid.*
2. *Ibid.*

modification of "a caravan" is correct; but the statement as a whole is misleading. It was only one caravan, not caravans; it was also sent from Ḥîrah and to Ṭâ'if, i.e., to the 'Ukâẓ fair near it, but not "by way of" it to Yaman. The attack was made, as already pointed out, not upon the caravan as such but upon its Ṭâ'ifian guarantor. It was made by a personal rival of his, not by or on behalf of the Makkan traders. Nor was the act in any way intended for closing the route altogether against Ḥîrah, nor for establishing the Makkans' control over it. In fact, except for this caravan from Ḥîrah to the 'Ukâẓ fair Watt has not brought forward any other instance showing that Ḥîrah or Persia carried on or attempted to carry on trade with Yaman via Ṭâ'if. And since this very assumption of the caravan having been intended for Yaman is wrong, the conclusion based upon it, namely, that the Quraysh leaders, by an attack on it, wanted to close the route altogether against Ḥîrah or Persia or to have some control over it is totally wrong. The sequel also does not in any way support the assumption. For the war which broke out over the incident was confined to hostilities between Makka and Ṭâ'if. Neither Ḥîrah nor Persia was involved in the conflict, neither directly, nor indirectly. If the original incident had at all been one against their interests, they would surely have sided with Ṭâ'if in the war, at least by retaliating upon Makkan trade with Iraq and Yaman, the more so because the latter country was now under Persian control. There is no record whatsoever that such was the case.

Indeed, there was no question of the Makkans' preventing the caravan from coming to Ṭâ'if or any other place. The quarrel, as already pointed out, arose simply out of the personal rivalry of two individuals, each of whom wanted the caravan should come to Ṭâ'if ('Ukâẓ). That the attack by the Makkan Barrâḍ upon his Ṭâ'ifian rival 'Urwah was personal and was made without any Makkan instigation is recognized by Watt himself only three pages earlier in his work where he unequivocally says that "the action was for him [Barrâḍ] primarily the pursuance of his own personal ends and not obedience to Makkan orders."[1] It is therefore very strange that having thus known and stated the exact nature of the incident Watt has subsequently twisted and utilized it to build up his theory of a trade war between Makka and Ḥîrah-Persia and, on that basis, a whole series of other assumptions and speculations.

Such a trade war would not even appear logical; for the Makkans were

1. *Ibid.*, 11.

carrying on trade with, among other places, Syria and Iraq in the north and Yaman and Abyssinia in the south and south-west. It was thus in their best interest to remain on good terms not only with the Byzantines but also with the others. The Quraysh traders could not just be that fool to attack a Ḥîran or Yamani caravan nearer Makka and thus hazard themselves to a certainty of similar or even worse retaliatory attacks on their own caravans by the others near their homes. Such irresponsible acts were all the more unlikely on their part in view of the fact, which Watt also points out, that the Quraysh leaders needed the cooperation of the tribes lying on the trade routes and often "would pay a chief for safe-conduct through his territory, for water and other supplies."[1] The sort of trade monopolistic ambitions laid by Watt at the door of the Makkan leaders would require the adhesion and cooperation of all the heterogeneous tribes along the routes north and south of Makka. The existence of such a *zollverein*, however, could not be conceived of for the Arabian peninsula in the late sixth or early seventh century A.C. On the contrary, the fact that Ṭâ'if allied with some other tribes were ranged against Makka in the *Fijâr* war argues as much against such an economic union as against Watt's theory of a confederacy of west Arabian tribes for military purposes under Makkan hegemony.

Watt would not however simply make the Quraysh leaders attempt to prevent the caravans from Ḥîrah from coming up to Ṭa'if; he would have us believe also that they wanted to prevent the Yamani caravans too from coming to the north, not even up to Makka. Indeed, it is not only on the basis of such assumptions of Makkan trade war simultaneously with the northerners and the southerners but also on the assumption of an acute trade rivalry between two groups of the Quraysh clans of Makka itself that Watt unfolds his thesis about the nature of the *Ḥilf al-Fuḍûl* as follows:[2]

"Against this background, the confederacy of the Fuḍûl .... takes on a new significance." The refusal of a Sahmî to pay for goods received from a Yamani merchant and the reaction of Banû Hâshim and the other clans, writes Watt, suggest that it marked a significant new trend in policy — "the climax of an attempt by the wealthier clans to exclude the Yamanis from the southern trade, and to concentrate it in their hands." Accordding to Watt, Banû Hâshim and the other clans were not sufficiently strong financially to

1. *Ibid.*
2. *Ibid.*, 15.

run their own caravans to Yaman, but "made something out of dealings with Yamani merchants in Mecca". Hence, if the caravans to Yaman were entirely controlled by clans like 'Abd Shams and Makhzûm, then the lesser clans "might have no goods to carry north to Syria; or else they would be admitted to share in caravans but only on the terms prescribed by the wealthier merchants..."

Thus does Watt conclude that because a Sahmî individual (Al-'Âṣ ibn Wâ'il) refused to pay for goods he had obtained from a visiting Yamanî merchant and because Banû Hâshim and some other clans formed the *Ḥilf al-Fuḍûl* as its sequel, the so-called "wealthier clans" like 'Abd Shams and Makhzûm must have been attempting to monopolize the sending of caravans to Yaman making the "lesser clans" thus fear that in that case they would "have no goods to carry north to Syria." Interestingly enough, just on the previous page of his text Watt has suggested that even before Abrahah's invasion Banû 'Abd Shams and Nawfal had "seized most of the trade with Syria and the Yemen which had formerly belonged to Hâshim and al-Muṭṭalib."[1] If such had been the situation some twenty years before the formation of the *Ḥilf al-Fuḍûl*, it is not understandable why Banû 'Abd Shams and their allies should still try to monopolize the caravans to Yaman. The case in the present instance is that of non-payment to a visting Yamanî merchant for his goods, not that of a Makkan caravan proceeding to Yaman. Therefore the question which suggests itself is: How could the "wealthier" clans ensure the safety of their caravans to Yaman while they themselves maltreated the Yamanîs at Makka or prevented them from coming there? How, again, could they expect to succeed in establishing such a monopoly when, as Watt assumes, a group of other clans at Makka itself, however less affluent, were opposed to such a policy? But then Watt's statement that Banû Hâshim and the other clans who formed the *Ḥilf* were not sufficiently strong financially "to run their own caravans to the Yemen" is his supposition only, which is contradicted even by the facts admitted by himself. The leading part in the formation of the *Ḥilf* was played by 'Abd Allah ibn Jud'ân of Banû Taym who, by Watt's own admission, was "one of the chief men of Mecca at the beginning of the war of the Fijâr."[2] Indeed he was, according to the sources, one of the richest, if not the richest man at Makka at the time. Again, even if 'Abû Ṭâlib's material position declined some years subsequently to the formation of the *Ḥilf*,

1. *Ibid.*, 14.
2. *Ibid.*, 32.

there were others of his clans like 'Abû Lahab and 'Abbâs who could stand comparison in wealth to many of Banû 'Abd Shams and Banû Makhzûm. Moreover Banû Asad, who were a member of the *Ḥilf*, were quite rich running their trade caravans to different places. The wares and caravan of Khadîjah (r.a.), who belonged to that clan, are stated by the authorities to be almost equal to those of all the other traders of Makka when the Prophet led her caravan to Syria some five years after the formation of the *Ḥilf*. This fact, as well as the well-known incident of 'Abû Ṭâlib's trade travel to Syria taking the boy Muḥammad (ﷺ) with him contradict Watt's suggestion that Banû Hâshim had been ousted from the field of Syrian trade as early as the time of Abrahah's invasion. The statements that the "lesser" clans were not financially able to run caravans to Yaman and therefore "made something out of dealings with Yamanî merchants in Mecca" on the one hand, and that if caravans to Yaman were "entirely controlled by clans like 'Abd Shams and Makhzûm" those "lesser" clans would have "no goods to carry north to Syria", on the other, are contradictory to each other. For, if they were able and used to run their caravans north to Syria, as implied here, there is no reason why they should not be able to run their caravans to Yaman as well. Moreover, if they were so poor as not to be able to run caravans to Yaman, as Watt assumes, that would mean a virtual and natural monoploy for the supposedly wealthy clans over that trade; and in that case there would be no need for them to have recourse to such an extraordinary act as the spoliation of a visiting Yamanî merchant to secure that monoploy. In fact, if the intention had been simply to prevent the "lesser clans" from obtaining goods even from a visiting Yamanî merchant, the simple business common sense would have dictated the "wealthier" clans to forestall their rivals by purchasing the Yamanî's goods and paying him off, instead of spoliating him and thereby jeopardizing the fate of the Makkan caravans in Yaman.

Thus the assumptions on which Watt bases his theory about the *Ḥilf al-Fuḍûl* are completely wrong and untenable. He assumes the existence of an acute inter-clan trade rivalry at Makka at the time of Abrahah's invasion, which had taken place at least twenty years prior to the formation of the *Ḥilf al-Fuḍûl*. He does not cite a single incident, neither before Abrahah's invasion nor after it for twenty years, to show that there did exist such a prolonged internecine trade war. But since the *Ḥilf* was formed by Banû Hâshim and some other like-minded clans and since the immediate occasion for it was the deceiving of a Yamanî merchant at Makka by a man of Banû Sahm,

Watt has used it as a posteriori evidence of an acute trade rivalry between the two groups of Quraysh clans and has given that presumed rivalry a sort of retrospective effect since before Abrahah's invasion, projecting it into the *Fijâr* war. He does so obviously by closing his eyes not only to the facts mentioned above but also to a very material fact that Banû Hâshim and the others of their group fought shoulder to shoulder with the so-called wealthier clans in the whole series of the fourth *Fijâr* war. Had that war been occasioned by the "wealthier" clans' monopolistic designs at the cost of the so-called "lesser" clans, as Watt suggests, the latter would not have made common cause with the former in that war.

Some other inaccuracies in Watt's assumption regarding the *Ḥilf* may be noted. That it was formed mainly at the instance of the *Muṭayyabûn* was pointed out, among others, by Ḥalabî;[1] but it was not exclusively confined to that group. The story of a conversation between *Khalîfah* 'Abd al-Malik and a member of Banû Nawfal which Ibn Isḥaq records and which Watt himself notes shows that both Banû 'Abd Shams and Banû Nawfal had entered the *Ḥilf* though they subsequently left it.[2] That Banû Asad also joined it is admitted by Watt.[3] Nor was the *Ḥilf* an alliance of the weaker and poorer clans against the stronger and wealthier clans. That it was not weak or ineffective is proved by the fact that the offender against the Yamanî merchant, Al-'Âṣ ibn Wâ'il of Banû Sahm was immediately brought to his knees, in spite of his supposed strong connections, and was made to pay the Yamani his due.[4] Significantly enough, there is nothing on record to show that the so-called wealthier and stronger group, in whose interest he is said to have commited the ill-advised act, did anything to come to his aid as against the coercive action of the *Ḥilf*, nor do they appear to have made any other move to counteract the latter's policy and influence. Watt does not at all allude to this remarkable silence and inactivity on the part of that group, not to speak of explaining it, although he emphasizes that Al-'Âṣ ibn Wâ'il's action marked the "climax of an attempt by the wealthier clans" to monopolize the southern trade. The obvious explanation of this situation is that what Al-'Âṣ did was entirely his personal folly having nothing to do with the supposed monopolistic endeavours of his group of clans. That these clans declined to inter-

1. *Supra*, p. 171.
2. Watt, *op. cit.*, 6.
3. *Ibid.*, 7, 92.
4. *Supra*, p. 171.

fere on behalf of the Yamanî was due to their clannish spirit and old sense of propriety in supporting a clan member or an ally at any event; but when they found that the *Ḥilf* had taken up the issue on a higher principle of justice and fairplay they quickly recognized that what the *Ḥilf* was doing was in the common interest of all. That is why they silently passed over the affair and implicitly acquiesced in the policy of the *Ḥilf*.

The *Ḥilf* indeed marked a "significant" trend in policy; but that trend was not a reaction to the supposed monopolistic attempts of the "wealthier" clans. The *Fijâr* wars had their origin in the rash act of a hot-headed individual and an equally irrational and false sense of tribal honour in supporting each and every clan member or client irrespective of the merits of the case. But the loss of trade and of men and money must have made the Quraysh aware of the folly of blind adherence to that policy. This realization was reinforced by the incident, closely following the conclusion of the *Fijâr* war, of the spoliation of the Yamanî merchant by Al-'Âṣ ibn Wâ'il of Banû Sahm which exposed the Makkan merchants to retaliatory measures by the Yamanîs and the tribes allied to them in the south. Hence the saner and more sober elements of Makka felt the need for enforcing a minimum standard of justice and fairplay for the sake of smoothly running the society and the Makkan mercantile operations. It was this need which gave birth to the *Ḥilf al-Fuḍûl*. Watt himself seems to touch on the point at a later stage in his work, though in a different context, where he stresses that "the nomadic virtue of fidelity in the keeping of trusts is certainly important, for a minimum level of business integrity is necessary in order to inspire that confidence which oils the wheels of trade; the confederation of the Fuḍûl seems to have originated in a protest against unscrupulously dishonest practices."[1] Indeed, the *Ḥilf* had its origin in a desire to maintain a minimum level of business integrity and in a protest against dishonest practices. Neither it, nor the *Fijâr* war was the result of a trade rivalry between two groups of the Quraysh clans or of the mercantile élite's attempt to monopolize the trade route between Ḥîrah-Persia on the one hand and Yaman on the other. And in so far as Watt recognizes that the *Ḥilf* was a protest against dishonest practices, he in effect contradicts his earlier remark[2] that it was not a league against injustice as such. Incidentally, J.W. Fück apparently adopts Watt's view about the

1. Watt, *op. cit.*, 74.
2. *Ibid.*, 6.

Fijâr war and is consequently mistaken in stating that its aim "was the control of the trade routes in the Nadjd and consequently the benefit of the great gains which this trade offered."[1]

1. *Encyclopedia of Islam*, New Edition, Vol. II, Leiden, 1983, P. 884, article on *Fidjâr*.

CHAPTER X

THE ALLEGATION OF AMBITION AND PREPARATION

It has been alleged that the Prophet was an ambitious person who since an early age had made preparations for the role he subsequently played. As an instance of this alleged ambition it has been suggested that since early youth he had cultivated his linguistic and poetical skill which he subsequently made use of in composing the Qur'ân. Further, it has been said that the traditional view of his being an illiterate person is not quite correct and that at least he knew reading and writing to some extent. The present chapter examines these statements and views of the orientalists.

I: ON THE THEME OF AMBITION IN GENERAL

Both Muir and Margoliouth speak very distinctly about the Prophet's alleged ambition. "Behind the quiet retiring exterior of Mahomet", writes Muir, "lay hid a high resolve, a singleness and unity of purpose, a strength and fixedness of will, a sublime determination, destined to achieve the marvellous work of bowing towards himself the heart of all Arabia as the heart of one man."[1] This ambition, adds Muir, was reinforced after Muḥammad's (ﷺ) arbitration in re-setting the Black Stone at the time of rebuilding the Ka'ba which "prompted the idea of his being chosen of God to be the Prophet of his people."[2]

Speaking in the same strain Margoliouth asserts: "We know, from the Koran, that Mohammed was a young man of promise" and that "of his ambition we have evidence in the comfort which his notoriety afforded him at a time when few things were going well with his project: Have we not expanded thy breast and exalted thy name? is the form which the divine consolation takes, when the Prophet is in trouble. Expansion of the breast, the organization of life about a new centre... and celebrity were then things for which he yearned."[3] Margoliouth even suggests that it was the Prophet's ambition and love for achieving personal distinction which prompted him to participate in the *Fijâr war*.[4]

On his part Watt also advances similar views though he does not speci-

1. W. Muir, *The Life of Maḥomet*, 3rd edn., 25-26.
2. *Ibid.*, 29.
3. Margoliouth, *op. cit.*, 64-65.
4. *Ibid.*, 65.

fically employ the term 'ambition' in his statements. Instead, he speaks of the Prophet's "consciousness" of his "great organizing ability" and adds a psychological dimension to that consciousness. Watt says that the Prophet was actuated by a "sense of deprivation" which was produced, first, by the absence of a father during his childhood and, secondly, by "his exclusion from the most lucrative trade."[1] The hint for this supposed sense of deprivation on the Prophet's part because of his being a posthumous child seems to have been made by Margoliouth, for he states in connection with the Prophet's childhood that the "condition of a fatherless lad was not altogether desirable".[2] Be that as it may, Watt definitely follows Margoliouth in citing the Qur'ânic evidence of divine consolation to the Prophet as a mark of his "preparation for his work as Messenger of God", with the only difference that while the latter invokes the evidence of *sûrah* 94, Watt does that of *sûrah* 93. Thus, describing the years that followed the Prophet's marriage to Khadîjah (r.a.) as "years of preparation for the work that lay ahead, Watt gives a translation of *'âyahs* 6-8 of *sûrah* 93[3] and observes that this passage "seems to refer to Muḥammad's early experiences" and that from this "we might perhaps argue that one stage in his development was the realization that the hand of God had been supporting him despite his misfortunes."[4] Citing the same passage, with a slightly different translation, in his latest work and similarly referring to the Prophet's early life and "preparation for his work as Messenger of God" Watt states: "The absence of a father must have produced a sense of deprivation in Muḥammad, and the real experience of poverty as a young man may well have nourished the sense of deprivation."[5] "It was most probably his exclusion from the most lucrative trade", concludes Watt, "coupled with his consciousness of having great organizing ability, that made Muhammad turn to brood over the general state of affairs in Mecca."[6]

Thus do the orientalists suggest ambition and preparation on the Prophet's part. It must at once be pointed out that this assumption of personal ambition

1. Watt, *Muḥammad's Mecca*, 50-51.

2. Margoliouth, *op. cit.*, 46.

3. The text runs as follows: ﴿ألم يجدك يتيما فآوى... ووجدك عائلا فأغنى﴾ "Did He not find thee an orphan and give thee shelter?... find thee poor and enrich thee?"

4. Watt, *M. at M.*, 39.

5. Watt, *Muḥammad's Mecca*, 50-51.

6. *Ibid.*, 50.

on his part, and of preparation by him to play the role of a Prophet-reformer is totally groundless and is not at all sustained by the sources, neither by the text of the Qur'ân, nor by that of the traditions. Margoliouth's innuendo that the Prophet participated in the *Fijâr* war to gain personal distinction is totally untenable and does not call for argumentaion. Here his handling of the Qur'ânic evidence in support of the allegation of ambition may be noted. In support of his statement that "Mohammed was a young man of promise" Margoliouth cites the authority of *sûrah* XI (Hûd), *'âyah* 65.[1] The citation is completely wrong and irralevant. The *'âyah* runs as follows:

﴿فعقروها فقال تمتعوا في داركم ثلـثة أيام ذلك وعد غير مكذوب﴾ (١١: ٦٥)

"But they humstrung her (the she camel), so he (Prophet Ṣâliḥ) said: Enjoy yourselves in your houses for three days. That is a promise not to be belied."(11:65) This statement, indeed the whole section here, refers to Prophet Ṣâliḥ and his warning to his people for their continued disobodience and the retribution that ultimately befell them. The "promise" (وعد) alluded to in the *'âyah* has reference to the warning of retribution which was not belied. By no stretch of the imagination could it be construed to refer to the early promise and determination of Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ).

In this connection Margoliouth also quotes, without citing it, from *sûrah* 94, giving the translation of its *'âyahs* 1 and 4 as a continuous sentence, omitting the two intermediate *'âyahs* as: "Have we not expanded thy breast and exalted thy name?"[2]

Admitting that the passage is a divine consolation to the Prophet at a moment of dejection, it is difficult to see how it refers to his ambition and resolve in his early life and to his yearning for celebrity, as Margoliouth concludes from it. Clearly his citation of 11:65 in support of the allegeation of "early promise" on the Prophet"s part is misleading; while his interpretation of the passage from *sûrah* 94 is wrong and inappropriate.

The same remote and inappropriate construction has been put in this connection by Watt on the Qur'ânic passage 93:6-8 (*sûrat al-Ḍuḥâ*). There is no doubt that the passage in question refers to the Prophet's situation in life prior to his marriage with Khadîjah (r.a.). It is also evident that it indicates a "realization on his part "that the hand of God had been supporting him despite his misfortunes." But that realization was unmistakably posterior to

1. Margoliouth, *op. cit.*, 64.
2. *Ibid.*, 65.

his call to prophethood and cannot be taken to refer to his state of mind prior to that event. Nor could it imply his mental preparation before the call. Nor does the passage sustain the assumption of a sense of deprivation on the Prophet's part. On the contrary, the predominant note in it is that of satisfaction and gratitude for the favourable change in his situation brought about by the hand of God. Whatever sense of deprivation he might have supposedly suffered from, it had clearly yielded place to an unmistakable sense of satisfaction and gratitude after his marriage with Khadîjah (r.a.). And that changed situation and happiness had been continuing for at least 15 years before the coming of the revelation to him, that is, for the very material period which Watt characterizes as the period of "preparation".

Again, the assumption of the Prophet's "exclusion from the most lucrative trade" is also worng. Watt of course cites in this connection the well-known Qur'ânic statement (43:31) "Why was not the Qur'ân sent down to some important man (*'aẓîm*) of the two towns (*qaryatayn*)?"[1] This passage indicates, as is admitted on all hands, that the Prophet was not at the time of his call one of the leading men of the two towns, Makka and Ṭâ'if. But that does not necessarily mean his "exclusion" as such from the "most lucrative trade". In fact, the theory of a trade rivalry between Banû Hâshim and some other Quraysh clans and the probable exclusion of Muḥammad (ﷺ) from the most profitable commercial operations, on which Watt bases a number of his conclusions, is, as shown earlier, groundless and totally untenable.[2] On the contrary the expression *'aghnâ* (أغنى), which is the keyword in 93:8, means, as Watt himself recognizes, not only possession of substantial wealth but also, in Watt's own words, "a place of relative independence and influence in the community." This is confirmed by the well-known fact, also admitted by Watt, that the Prophet, on the eve of his call, had entered into matrimonial relationships with the wealthy and influential 'Abû Lahab on the one hand, and with another very wealthy member of Banû Makhzûm, on the other. Thus the suggestion that during the fifteen years from his marriage with Khadîjah (r.a.) to his call to prophethood a sense of deprivation due to poverty and exclusion from the most lucrative trade etc, "made Muḥammad brood over the general state of affairs in Mecca" and ultimately play the role of a Prophet-reformer is both antithetical to the tenor and purport of *sûrah*

1. Watt, *Muḥammad's Mecca*, 50.
2. *Supra*, pp. 189-190.

93 and contray to the well-known facts of his life relating to that material period.

Whatever might have been the state of Muḥammad's (ﷺ) mind during the years preceding his call, there is no doubt that he did not suffer from any sense of deprivation. Nor did he make any plans and preparation for playing the part of a Prophet. This is clearly evidenced by the Qur'ânic passage 28:86 which states:

﴿وما كنت ترجوا أن يلقىٰ إليك الكتـٰب إلا رحمة من ربك...﴾ (٢٨:٨٦)

"You were not wont to expect that the book would be sent down on you; but (it has been given you) as a mercy from your Lord..." (28:86).

This unequivocal statement of the Qur'ân decisively negatives any ambition or intention on Muḥammad's (ﷺ) part to become a Prophet, though he had occasionally engaged himself in solitary stay and contemplation prior to the receipt of revelation. Nor did he ever exhibit by his deeds and demeanour any ambition or intention of becoming a leader in his community, not to speak of becoming a Prophet. It is common knowledge that a leader does not emerge on the scene all of a sudden but through a process of gradual development and preparation which seldom remains concealed from the view and observation of his own people and immediate society. The conduct and activities of the would-be-leader make his society aware of his ambition. Yet, there is nothing on record to suggest that such was the case with Muḥammad (ﷺ). If he ever had entertained any plan and made any preparation for becoming a leader, that would have been known to his people in some way or other and that would invariably have formed an important item of criticism by his subsequent opponents. But nothing of the kind is discernible from the sources. Till the receipt of the revelation he had not made any mark, by his deeds or intentions, as an aspriant to leadership in his society. Truly did his adversaries point out, as the Qur'ânic passage 43:31 noticed above shows, that he was not that important a man in the two towns to be the Prophet. Nothing could be a stronger testimony to the lack of preparation and ambition on his part than this statement of the Qur'ân.

That the coming of revelation was a sudden and unexpected development to Muḥammad (ﷺ) is evident also from the famous tradition recording his immediate reaction to the event. He hurried back home from the mount Ḥirâ' bewildered and trembling in terror and asked his wife to cover him. Then he narrated to her what had happened to him in the cave, expressing

his fear that something untoward was perhaps going to happen to him, perhaps he was going to die. She comforted and assured him, saying that Allah could not mean any harm to him since he was so good and honest a man, always speaking the truth, entertaining guests and helping his relatives and the needy, etc. After the initial shock was over she took him to to her knowledgeable cousin Waraqah ibn Nawfal to ascertain the significance of her husband's experience in the cave of Ḥirâ'. Waraqah, after having heard about the incident, expressed his studied opinion that Muḥammad (ﷺ) had received a commission from Allah similar to what had been previously received by Prophet Mûsâ and that this would involve him (Muḥammad, ﷺ) in trouble with his own people. This last remark caused further surprise in him.[1]

Now, as Maudûdî points out,[2] several aspects of this report need to be noted carefully. In the first place, the spectacle we get of the Prophet here is that of a person who is clearly bewildered and confused at some unexpected and extraordinary development. Had he ever entertained any ambition, made preparations for playing the role of a Prophet or religious leader and expected or solicited any divine communication being made to him, his reaction would have been quite different. He would not have been bewildered and terrified, but would rather have returned from mount Ḥirâ' happy and confident in the success of his endeavours and expectations, not needing consolation and assurance from anyone else, and would have straightway proceeded to proclaim his commission and mission.

Secondly, the reaction of Khadîjah (r.a.) is equally significant. Had her husband been ambitious and making any preparation for playing the role of a social or religious reformer, that fact, of all perons on earth, would have been known at least to her. Hence, when the Prophet returned from mount Ḥirâ' with his new experience, she would have simply congratulated him on the ultimate success of his exercises and expectations and, instead of taking him to her cousin to obtain his opinion, would have taken other appropriate steps to embark her husband on his new role.

Thirdly, the attitude of Waraqah is similary noteworthy. He was a close relative of the Prophet and knew him and his background well since his boyhood. Waraqah was also conversant with the Christian scripture and the fact

1. *Bukhârî*, no. 3. See also *infra*, pp. 369-373.
2. 'Abul 'A'lâ Maudûdî, *Sîrat-i-Sarwar-i-'Âlam*, I., Lahore , 1978, Ch. II.

of divine revelation. With that knowledge he instantly came to the conclusion that the stranger who had appeared to Muḥammad (ﷺ) in the cave of Ḥirâ' could not be anyone but the angel who used to bring God's message to Mûsâ. Had the Prophet been ambitious and desirous of becoming a religious leader and had he been in the habit of receiving instructions in the teachings of Christianity from Waraqah, as is often alleged, the latter's reaction and attitude would have been quite different. He would have either informed Muḥammad (ﷺ) that he had obtained what he had so long been seeking or, likelier still, would have exposed his preparations and pretensions to the public. That Waraqah did neither of these is in itself an evidence that he neither imparted lessons in Christianity to Muḥammad (ﷺ) nor was aware of any ambition and preparation on his part to become a socio-religious reformer. On the contrary, Waraqah's reaction clearly shows that by his study of the previous scriptures he had come to learn that the advent of a Prophet was foretold in them, that his advent was expected shortly and that Muḥammad (ﷺ) answered the scriptural descriptions of that awaited Prophet. It may further be pointed out that the orientalists, more particularly Watt, state that Waraqah's assurance gave Muḥammad (ﷺ) confidence in his mission.[1] This acknowledged lack of confidence on the Prophet's part at the very inception of his mission further belies the assumption of ambition and preparation on his part. To these may be added the well-known facts of his denial of any desire for material gains out of his mission and, more particularly, his turning down of the Quraysh leaders' repeated offers of wealth, leadership and power to him in lieu of his abandoning his mission.

Before ending this section it may be noted, however, that the Prophet did of course ultimately become the leader of his people and of the faithful in general. And because of this fact the orientalists seem to read back ambition and preparations on his part into his pre-prophetic life. But having strict regard to the facts and to the sources, and also keeping in view the historical norm that no leader emerges on the scene all of a sudden, the most that can be said is that the coming of the revelation to Muḥammad (ﷺ) and his call to prophethood was the beginning of that process which ultimately invested him with leadership; it was not the result of his ambition and preparation since his early life. At the time of his call to prophethood he was neither a potential leader nor was known to have aspired after leadership.

1. Watt, *M. at M.*, 50; *Muḥammad's Mecca*, 59.

II. THE ALLEGED CULTIVATION OF POETICAL SKILL

As an instance of his alleged ambition and preparation it has been alleged that since his early life the Prophet had taken care to develop his linguistic and poetical skill which he utilized in "composing" the Qur'ân. Thus W. Muir says that the spectacles of literary and poetical competitions at the 'Ukâẓ fair excited in Muḥammad (ﷺ) "a desire after personal distinction", as they also provided him with "rare opportunities of cultivating his genius, and learning from the great masters and most perfect models of the art of poetry and power of rhetoric."[1] And echoing Muir Margoliouth observes that Muḥammad (ﷺ) might have had some practice in eloquence "in which he afterwards excelled".[2] He further states that though the Prophet had some aversion to poetry, the "language of the Koran was thought by experts to bear a striking likeness" to early Arab poetry. Obviously alluding to the poetical competitions at 'Ukâẓ, to which Muir makes pointed reference in this connection, Margoliouth observes: "Of those lays which were recited on solemn or festive occasions some verses then stuck in his memory and provided the form of future revelations."[3]

It must at once be pointed out that the Qur'ân is not considered a book of poems by any knowledgeable person. Nor did the Prophet ever indulge in versifying. It was indeed an allegation of the unbelieving Quraysh at the initial stage of their opposition to the revelation that Muḥammad (ﷺ) had turned a poet; but soon enough they found their allegation beside the mark and, as will be seen shortly, changed their lines of criticism in view of the undeniable fact of the Prophet's being unlettered and completely unaccustomed to the art of poetry-making, saying that he had been tutored by others, that he had got the "old-world stories" written for him by others and read out to him in the morning and the evening.[4] This allegation also was squarely rebutted by the Qur'ân.

As regards the allegation of poetry-making or the Qur'ân being in any way a work of poems, it strongly denies the charge as follows:

﴿وما علمنـٰه الشعر وما ينبغى له إن هو إلا ذكر وقرءان مبين﴾ (٣٦ : ٦٩)

"And We have not taught him (the Prophet) poetry, nor is it meet for him.

1. Muir, *Life of Mahomet*, 3rd edition, 15 (1st edn. II, 7).
2. Margoliouth, *op. cit.*, 52-53.
3. *Ibid*, 60.
4. *Infra*, pp. 268-274.

This is naught but a citation, a Qur'ân, explicit." (36:69)

﴿وما هو بقول شاعر قليلا ما تؤمنون﴾ (٦٩ : ٤١)

"And it is not the saying of a poet. Little is it that you believe." (69:41)

In fact, quantitatively speaking, not even one fourth of the Qur'ân is what might be called *saj'* or rhymed prose. Margoliouth himself in effect contradicts his innuendo in two ways. He states at a subsequent stage in his work that Muḥammad (ﷺ) lacked eloquence and was not a ready debater so that he did not "try his chances" in what is called the "Council Chamber" of the Quraysh.[1] Secondly, while studiously shifting here the burden of opinion on the shoulder of "experts" in the subject Margoliouth himself holds a diametrically opposite view which he put forward subsequently in an independent study on the origins of Arabic poetry and in which he advanced the theory that the corpus of what is known as pre-Islamic poetry was a post-Islamic development modelled on the *saj'* of the Qur'ân.[2] This theory has naturally elicited a good deal of discussion,[3] but the very fact of his having advanced the theory constitutes a direct contradiction by himself of his earlier assertion that the pre-Islamic poetry "provided the form of future revelations."

III. THE QUESTION OF LITERACY: WATT'S THEORY

Though alleging that the Prophet cultivated his linguistic and poetic skill, both Muir and Margoliouth hold, in conformity with the sources, that he was an unlettered person. Margoliouth puts it categorically, saying that Muḥammad (ﷺ) "was not as a child taught to read and write, though these arts were known to many Meccans" and "their use in commerce was so great."[4] Interestingly enough, by pressing the two facts mentioned here by Margoliouth, namely, the prevalence of literacy among the Makkans and its use in commerce, Watt suggests that the Prophet was not altogether unlettered but knew some reading and writing. By citing a number of Qur'ânic statements and a few other facts showing that reading and writing were in vogue at Makka and that these skills were used for both commercial and religious purposes Watt states that in view of these facts "there is a presumption

1. Margoliouth, *op. cit.*, 72.

2. *J.R.A.S.*, July 1925, 417-449.

3. Ṭâ Ha Ḥusayn wrote his work *Fî al-Sha'r al-Jâhilîyyah* on the basis of Margoliouth's theory. It elicited a good deal of discussion. See for a concise account Muḥammad Muṣṭafâ Hudara's essay in *Manâhij al-Mustashriqîn*, Pt.I., Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States, pp., 396-438.

4. Margoliouth, *Mohammed etc.*, 59.

that Muḥammad knew at least enough to keep commercial records."[1] Watt also cites in this connection parts of the Qur'ânic passage 29:48 and 25:5. These say, respectively, "You were not used to reading any book before it (the Qur'ân), nor to tracing it with your hand" and "Those were old-world fables he had them written down for him".[2] Watt interprets these two passages to say that the first passage means that "Muḥammad himself had not read any scriptures" previously, but that a man like Waraqah ibn Nawfal "or some of Muḥammad's alleged informants" had probably read the Bible in Syriac, no Arabic translation of it being available at that time. As to the second passage Watt says that it "can mean" that Muḥammad had the old-world stories written down for him "by secretaries". Thus arguing Watt concludes: "The probability is that Muḥammad was able to read and write sufficiently for business purposes, but it seems certain that he had not read any scriptures."[3]

Watt further discusses in this connection the meaning of the term *'ummiyy* occurring in the Qur'ân. Before dealing with that point, however, it would be worthwhile to discuss the above noted reasoning of Watt. It is well-known that some people at Makka at that time definitely knew reading and writing. It is also a recognized principle that when a certain situation or feature prevails *generally* in a given society or country, it gives rise to a presumption of such a situation or feature in respect of a particular individual of that society or country. But niether the sources at our disposal nor the instances cited by Watt create the impression that reading and writing was the order of the day at Makka on the eve of the Prophet's emergence, nor that such was the case with any sizeable portion of the then Makkan community, not to speak of a majority of them. Hence there is no case for a presumption of reading and writing in respect of the Prophet. On the contrary, the well-known circumstances of his early life give rise to a strong presumption that he had not any opportunity or chance for receiving a formal education during the formative years of his life.

Secondly, with regard to the two Qur'ânic passages, 29:48 and 25:5, Watt has quoted them both only partly, had taken them both out of their contexts and has put on them wrong and tendentious interpretations not supported by

1. Watt, *Muḥammad's Mecca*, 52.
2. See below, text, for further discussion.
3. Watt, *Muḥammad's Mecca*, 52.

their contexts nor by the tenor of any of the passages as a whole. To see how he has done so it is necessary to quote the passages in original and in full. The text of 29:48 is as follows:

﴿وما كنت تتلوا من قبله من كتـب ولا تخطه بيمينك إذا لارتاب المبطلون﴾ (٢٩ : ٤٨)

"And you were not used to reading/reciting any book before this, nor to writing it with your right hand. In that case the prattlers could have entertained doubts." (29:48) It is clear that the statement has been made in the context of the unbelievers' allegation that the Prophet had himself composed what he was giving out as revelation from Allah. The passage tersely exposes the absurdity of that allegation by simply pointing out the indisputable fact known to every Makkan at that time that the Prophet did not previously use to read and write anything so that it was quite unlikely on his part to have come forward all of a sudden with a remarkable literary production and give it out as Allah's revelation. The implication is all the more clear from the last clause of the statement which says: "in that case the prattlers could have entertained doubts." It is also noteworthy that the expression *ma kunta* (ما كنت) implies a state of being unused or unable to (read and write). Also the indefinite form in which the word *kitab* (من كتاب) has been used clearly means "any book", not the book (الكتاب), which is the form in which the Qur'ân invariably refers to the Bible.

In his translation of the passage Watt of course uses the expression "any book". He also notes in connection with his discussion that there are "many reasons for thinking" that the Prophet "had never read the Bible or any other book." But having said so he proceeds to restrict the meanning of the passage to the Prophet's not having read "any scriptures" and adds that though he "himself" did not read the Bible nor wrote it down, persons like Waraqah ibn Nawfal and some of the Prophet's "alleged informants" had read the Bible in Syriac. Neddless to say that such an interpretation is not sustained by the passage. Whether Waraqah or any other person had read the Bible in Syriac or in any other language is totally extraneous to the meaning and purport of the passage which speaks only about the Prophet's antecedent. Watt's interpretation is cleverly geared to sustain another assumption which will be discussed shortly, namely, that Muḥammad (ﷺ) obtained through others Biblical information and ideas which he embodied in the Qur'ân.

More preposterous, however, is Watt's interpretation of the passage 25:5. To realize this it is necessary to quote the passage along with its immedi-

ately preceding and following *'âyahs*. The text runs as follows:

﴿وقال الذين كفروا إن هذا إلا إفك افترىه وأعانه عليه قوم آخرون فقد جاءو ظلما وزورا (٤) وقالوا أسـطير الأولين اكتتبها فهى تملىٰ عليه بكرة وأصيلا (٥) قل أنزله الذى يعلم السر فى السمـوٰت والأرض...﴾

"(4) And the unbelievers say: This (the revelation) is nothing but a lie which he (the Prophet) has forged and in which another group of people have assisted him. Thus they have come up with an unjust and false allegation. (5) And they say: (These are) tales of the ancients which he has caused to be written (for him); then these are read unto him morning and evening. (6) Say: The One Who knows the secret of the heavens and the earth has sent it down..." (25:4-6)

It is obvious that the statement in *'ayah* 5 is made in the context of the unbelievers' allegations and in continuation of their rebuttal as mentioned in *'âyah* 4. This *'âyah* mentions that the unbelievers used to say that the revelation was a lie and that its text had been fabricated by the Prophet with the assistance of a number of other people. It also condemns the allegation as a downright injustice and falsehood (ظلما and زورا). Continuing this rebuttal *'ayah* 5 mentions the unbelievars' other allegation that what was being presented as revelation was mere old-world stories the Prophet had got written for him and read unto him morning and evening. Significantly enough, here also the pith of the allegation was that the Prophet was assisted by others. This is also denied by pointing out that the One Who knows the secret of the heavens and the earth has sent down the revelation. The reference to the "One Who knows the secret of the heavens and the earth" made in this connection is just to the point. For, revelation is essentially an intimate affair between Allah and his Messenger and none else could be an eye-witness to this process. Indeed, in many places in the Qur'ân it is very rightly stated that Allah alone is the best witness between the Prophet and his detractors.

In dealing with this statement of 25:5 Watt of course recognizes that it was an allegation of the Prophet's pagan opponents that the revelations were "old-world stories" he had got written down for him; but Watt does not follow the meaning and implication of the statement as a whole. He sidetracks the fact of the denial of the allegation, which is the sole essence and spirit of the statement. Instead, he treats the allegation as an isolated statement and suggests that it "can mean" that the Prophet did not "himself" write down the text but had it written by "secretaties". Thus in effect Watt adopts the unbelievers' allegation and suggests that though the Prophet had the text of what

he gave out as revelation written by others, he, in reply to his opponents' allegation to the same effect, stated that he *himself* had not written it! Nothing could be a more stark disregard of the context and sequence of the text and a more absurd misinterpretation of it.

If Watt had been a little careful before advancing his interpretation he would have asked himself the vital question, which is the key to the whole situation, namely, why should the Prophet's opponents have made that type of allegation saying that he had obtained the help of others in composing the text of the revelation and had the old-world stories etc. written down for him by others? A moment's pause would have led to the unavoidable answer that they said so because they and everyone of their contemporaries knew full well that Muḥammad (ﷺ) was himself incapable of producing such a literary piece as he was giving out to them as "revelation". In fact they did not stop by saying only that the Prophet had the old-world stories written for him. They took care to mention also that he had those stories read or recited unto him in the morning and in the evening. The obvious implication is that they knew also that he could not do by simply having the stories etc. written for him; he needed them to be recited or read unto him for the purpose of mastering and memorizing them so that he could reproduce them before men. The omission of this very essential part of the *'âyah* regarding the unbelievers' allegation constitutes the second grave defect in Watt's treatment of it. He avoids mentioning it obviously because it would dismantle his contention. Thus by completely disregarding the context and tenor of the *'âyah*, by using only a fragment of it and by omitting its second part, which is vitally damaging to his interpretation, Watt attempts to make one of the strongest Qur'ânic statements showing the Prophet's "illiteracy" yield a contrary impression. Watt also does not seem to be aware of the implications of the assumption of mentors or secretaries for the Prophet, of which Margoliouth seems to be quite aware. If the Prophet had employed others to compose the text of the revelation for him, or, indeed if he had taken lessons from any one of his contemporaries, he would invariably have been exposed by those supposed mentors or secretaries, the more so because his claims to prophethood involved his leadership over the whole community including the latter too.

Having thus grossly misinterpreted the above mentioned Qur'ânic passages Watt concludes: "The probability is that Muḥammad was able to read

and write sufficiently for business purposes, but it seems certain that he had not read any scriptures." Watt further says that this conclusion "gives Muslim scholars all that is essential for apologetic purposes".[1] He then takes up the term *'ummiyy* occurring in the Qur'ân and says that though the Muslim scholars take it as implying "complete inability to read and write" it actually means "a people without a written scripture". He refers in this connection to the Qur'ânic passages 2:78, 3:20, 3:75 and 62:2, all of which he says convey the same meaning. Therefore, he concludes, the *'ummiyy* Prophet means the non-Jewish, gentile or unscriptured Prophet and that this means "that Muḥammad had no direct knowledge of the Bible."[2]

The innuendo in Watt's declaration that his conclusion gives Muslim scholars all that is essential for apologetic purposes may be overlooked; but it is essential to point out that Muslim scholars do not interpret the term *'ummiyy* only in the sense of an illiterate or uneducated person. Both classical and modern Muslim scholars clearly state that the term also conveys the sense of being "unscriptured" or "non-Jewish."[3] While accusing the Muslim scholars of having interpreted the term in only one sense, Watt himself in fact attempts to show that at all the places in the Qur'ân where the term occurs it yields only one and the same meaning of being non-Jewish or unscriptured.

Thus even with regard to 2:78, where such an interpretation is clearly inadmissible, because the whole description is about the Jews, he imposes that interpretation upon the expression and says that "careful reading of the verse shows that the reference is to the people without a written scripture".[4] That it is not at all so will be clear if we look to the *'âyah* and its context a little carefully. It runs as follows:

﴿ومنهم أميّون لا يعلمون الكتـــب إلا أمانيّ وإن هم إلا يظنون﴾ (٢ : ٧٨)

"And among them are *'ummiyyûn* who do not know the book except *'amâniyya*; and they do nothing but conjecture."(2:78) Watt gives a translation of the *'âyah* up to the expression *'illâ 'amâniyya* (إلا أماني) as:

1. Watt, *Muḥammad's Mecca*, 52.

2. *Ibid*., 53.

3. See Ibn Hishâm, II (ed. Tadmurî), p.220; also Râghib al-Isfahânî, (d. 502 H.) *Al-Mufradât Fî Gharîb al-Qur'ân*, 23; Al-Farrâ' (Abû Zakariya Yaḥyâ ibn Ziyâd, d. 207 H.), *Ma'ânî al-Qur'ân* Vol. I., Beirut, n.d., 224; Maudûdî, *Tafhîm al-Qur'ân*, English tr. *Towards Understanding the Qur'ân*, (tr. Z.I. Ansari) Vol. I., Leicester, 1988, pp. 87, 242, 265.

4. Watt, *Muḥammad's Mecca*, 53.

"among them are *'ummiyyûn* who do not know the book except from hearsay" and adds that the rendering of *'illâ 'amâniyya* as "except from hearsay", which is Pickthall's, "is much disputed but hardly affects the argument." Also, citing Pickthall Watt says that *kitâb* should be translated as scripture.[1]

Watt is right in saying that Pickthall's rendering of the expression *'illâ 'amâniyya* "is much disputed". In fact it is simply wrong; for no standard lexicon or dictionary puts that meaning on it. Its generally accepted meaning is "desires", "whims" or words to the same effect. In fact if Watt had taken the trouble to refer to A. Yusuf Ali's translation, the first edition of which appeared in 1934, only four years after that of Pickthall's, he would have found that the expression has been translated there as "desires". Even A.J.Arberry gives its meaning as "fancies".[2] Watt seems to have chosen to use Pickthall's translation because it supports his intrepretation of *'ummiyyûn* here as people without a scripture.

But apart from the disputed meaning of *'âmâniyya*, the *'âyah* does in no way support the interpretation of *'ummiyyûn* given here by Watt. The whole context of the *'âyah* is a description of the conduct of the Jews of the time. Thus *'âyah* 76 speaks of their concealing important aspects of the revelation they themselves had received; while *'âyah* 77 states, by way of a warning to them: "Do they not know that Allah knows what they conceal and what they reveal?" Then comes *'âyah* 78, which is quoted above, starting with the expression: "And among them...", thus continuing the description; and the succeeding *'âyah* 79 refers to their practice of giving out their own compositions as revelations from God, thus elucidating one of the ways in which they used to indulge in their *'âmâniyya* (fancies) in respect of God's revelation. In fact the description and censure continue till *'âyah* 82. Obviously the *'âyah* 78 refers to the *'ummiyyûn* of the Jews, i.e. the uninformed and ignorant ones of them, not to any other group of people. If the reference was to the Arabs or unscriptured people in general, the expression *wa minhum* (ومنهم) "And among them" would be totally irrelevant and uncalled for; because the Arabs or other non-Jewish people there were all unscriptured.

Even keeping aside the context and taking the *'âyah* individually, it is impossible to reconcile Watt's interpretation with it. Thus employing the English equivalents suggested by Watt the translation of the *'âyah* would

1. *Ibid.*
2. A.J. Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted.* O.U.P. (Paperback), 10.

stand as: "Among them are unscriptured people who do not know the scripture (*al-kitâb*) except *'âmâniyya...*)". It is simply pointless to allege that an "unscriptured people" did not know the scripture! Such a statement, besides being nonsense, does not have the force of censure which is the unmistakable tenor of the *'âyah* in question. The oddity of the interpretation would be all the clearer if we take into consideration the last part of the *'âyah* which, characteristically enough, Watt does not mention. This last clause consists of five words — *wa in-hum 'illâ yaẓunnûna*-(وإن هم إلا يظنون) — "and they do nothing but conjecture". This clasue is just in continuation of the censure and in the nature of an elaboration of the term *'amâniyya* used previously in the *'âyah*. Hence this concluding clause of the *'âyah* also will have no force of censure and no purposeful sense if the expression, *'ummiyyûn* is taken to imply a people who have not received any scripture; for it is no fault in such a people that they should only conjecture about the contents of *the book*. Thus, whether considered in its context or in isolation the *'âyah* clearly means that "among them", that is among the Jews about whom the whole discussion is going on here, there are *'ummiyyûn*, that is those who are ignorant and do not take care to study their own scripture, who only follow the dictates of their fancies and indulge in conjectures. Not only that, they also give out their own compostitions as *the book* from God, as the succeeding *'âyah* 79 says. This latter statement also would be meaningless if the *'ummiyyûn* about whom it speaks is taken to mean a people without a scripture. For there was no question for such a people giving out something as *the book* to the people.

Watt thinks that the word *'ummiyy* is derived from the Hebrew phrase *ummot hâ 'olâm* (the peoples of the world of gentiles). Such might have been the case; but there is the more authoritative view that it is derived from the Arabic *'umm* (mother) and therefore, *'ummiyy* means one who has no acquired knowledge except what he received at his mother's cradle. In any case, it is fairly certain that the Jews used to refer to non-Jews as *'ummiyy* or unscriptured people. They did so derisively to imply that since the other people did not possess any revealed book they were devoid of knowledge and learning or, in other words, they were ignorant and illiterate. Thus even from the Jew's practice the word bore the meaning of illiterate or ignorant. It may be recalled in this connection that the ancient Greeks also used to refer to all non-Greek (non-Hellenic) people as 'barbarians'. This word also conveyed not simply the meaning of non-Greek but essentially that of a person beyond

the pale of civilization and culture. And it is this latter meaning that ultimately prevailed to the exclusion of the original meaning. Similarly the Arabs used to refer to a non-Arab as *'a'jam*, that is one who is unable to express himself fluently, the original meaning of *'Arab* being one who could express himself fluently. Subsequently the original meaning of *'a'jam* receded into the background and it came to imply simply a non-Arab or foreigner. Again, the ancient Hindus used to call a non-Aryan a *yavana*; but subsequently the word came to denote not simply a non-Aryan, but a non-Hindu, more particulary a Muslim. It is thus clear that such words had both original as well as acquired meanings and that for a period of transition those words bore both meanings. It appears that so far as the word *'ummiyy* is concerned, both its original and derived senses were in vogue when the Qur'ân was revealed. Hence we find it used in both the senses in the Qur'ân, the exact sense at each place to be determined by the context and tenor of the statement. This is in addition to the well-known fact that in every language there are many words each of which bears a number of different meanings depending on the context and the situation.

As shown above, the term *'ummiyy* has definitely been used in the sense of "unlettered" in 2:78. There are five other places where the term occurs in the Qur'ân. In three of these places, namely, 3:20, 3:75 and 62:2, the term occurs in the plural and accusative form and in each of these places it may be taken either in the sense of illiterate and uninformed people or in that of people without a scripture. At the other two places, namely, 7:157 and 7:158, it is used in its singular form and as a personal epithet of the Prophet. At each of these places it signifies an unletterd person and can in no way be taken to mean a person without a scripture or a non-Jewish individual. This would be evident if we simply look at the relevant parts of these two *'âyahs*. They run as follows:

﴿الذين يتبعون الرسول النبى الأمىّ الذى يجدونه مكتوبا عندهم فى التورنة والإنجيل... فالذين ءامنو به وعزّروه ونصروه واتبعوا النور الذى أنزل معه أولئك هم المفلحون﴾ (٧: ١٥٧)

"Those who follow the Messenger, the *'ummiyy* (unlettered) Prophet, whom they find mentioned to them in the *Tawrâh* and the *Injîl*,... So those who believe in him, respect him and help him, and follow *the light* which is sent down with him, those are they who will succeed." (7:157).

﴿قل يأيها الناس إنى رسول الله إليكم جميعا... فـَامنوا بالله ورسوله النبىّ الأمىّ الذى يؤمن بالله وكلمته واتبعوه لعلكم تهتدون﴾ (٧: ١٥٨)

"Say: O men, I am Allah's Messenger to you all... So believe in Allah and His Messenger, the *'ummiyy* (unlettered) Prophet who believes in Allah and His words. And follow him so that you may get guidance." (7:158).

Two points need to be specially noted about these two *'âyahs*. In the first place, while the burden of the first *'âyah* is that the Prophet was sent as Messenger of Allah to Jews as well as Christians "who find him mentioned to them in the *Tawrah* and the *Injîl*", the second *'âyah* states that he was sent to "all the people" of the world. This being the main burden of the two *'âyahs* it would be quite inappropriate to emphasize here his non-Jewish origin or Arab ethnic affiliation. In fact it would be simply self-defeating to say that a non-Jewish or unscriptured Prophet was sent to the Jews and Christians who had their scriptures. Rather, keeping in view the fact that it was the unbelievers' frequent allegation that what Muḥammad (ﷺ) was giving out was his own fabrication, and also the fact that the appeal was addressed to a wider audience, it is only natural that the case was put in the way best calculated to rebut that allegation. Secondly, both the *'âyahs* also say, implicitly as well as explicitly, that the Prophet had been endowed with a revealed book which he himself believes ﴿الذى يؤمن بالله وكلمـته﴾ and asked his audience to beleive in it ﴿واتبعوا النور الذى أنزل معه﴾. Thus at both the places the expression can only mean an unlettered or untutored Prophet, not at all an un-Jewish or unscriptured Prophet. For one thing, it would simply be antithetical to describe him as an "unscriptured" Prophet when he had already received a scripture (*kitâb*) and which he had been asking all the people — Makkans, Arabs, Jews, Christians and "all the people" of the world — to believe. The whole point at issue was whether the scripture he claimed to have received from Allah was to be believed or not; and in that situation he simply could not have said that he was an "unscrptured" Prophet.

Whatever meaning one may like to put on this term, it should once again be emphasized that this word is not the sole Qur'ânic evidence of the Prophet's being unlettered. As already noted,[1] there are a number of Qur'ânic statements, made mainly in reply to the various allegations of the unbelievers, that unmistakably show that the Prophet was unacquainted with the art of reading and writing and that this fact was so well known to his adversaries that they were forced to modify their lines of attack saying that he had got his texts written down and read unto him by others.

1. *Supra*, 241-246.

Before leaving this topic it would be worthwhile to mention that Watt opens his discussion by observing that the "main body of later Muslim opinion argued that the Qur'ân was all the greater miracle because Muḥammad could neither read nor write..."[1] It must at once be pointed out that Muslims hold that the Prophet was unlettered not because the "main body of later Muslim opinion" argued that for the sake of proving the miracle of the Qur'ân, but because the Qur'ân itself clearly proves him to be so and throws out a continuing challenge to anyone to come up with a single *sûrah* comparable to any of its long or short *sûrahs*. Watt's premise and the way in which he misconstrues the Qur'ânic statements in this regard only indicate that he is out to prove the reverse, namely, that the Prophet did know reading and writing and, by implication, the Qur'ân is not that much of a miracle. But after all his laboured interpretations and arguments he concludes that probably "Muḥammad was able to read and write sufficiently for besiness purposes." Obviously the question his conclusion suggests is: Was it likely or natural for anyone with such modest knowledge of the three Rs and without any prior literary effort of any sort till at least the fortieth year of his life to produce all of a sudden a text which constitutes acknowledgedly "the supreme classic" of Arabic literature?[2] Untortunately Watt has not asked himself the question, not to speak of attempting an answer to it.

Finally a word about the theme of preparation in general, to which this question of the Prophet's illiteracy is clearly related. A secular historian indeed finds it difficult to explain the emergence of a leader or in fact any development without taking into account the circumstances of the time and the background and preparation, direct and indirect, of the historical figure concerned. In a sense, however, the question is related to another basic problem of history, namely, whether history creates the individual or the individual creates history. Without entering into that issue it may only be emphasized that so far as Muḥammad (ﷺ) is concerned he is not simply and only a historical figure like any other historical personality. He is first and foremost a Prophet, a Messenger of God. This may be a matter of belief; but it is necessary not to ignore that belief. This being the case, any attempt

1. Watt, *Muḥammad's Mecca*, 51.

2. The phrase is that used by the Oxford University Press in its notice to A.J. Arberry's translation of the Qur'ân in "the world classics" series, paperback edition, 1982 reprint, back cover.

to make an assessment of Muḥammad (ﷺ) only by the usual standard of historical investigation is apt more often than not to overlook or overshadow the extraordinary aspect of Prophethood. A proper appreciation of him calls for an awareness of this "extraordinary" in him notwithstanding his being a historical figure.

It is of course admitted that a non-Muslim is not conscientiously bound to believe that Muḥammad (ﷺ) was a Messenger of Allah; but when a professedly historical study is directed predominantly to show that he was not quite a Messenger of Allah, or to illustrate the "danger" posed by Islam to the 'Western civilzation", the work in effect degenerates into a polemic, perhaps in spite of the intention of its author to the contrary. Watt indeed signifies that intention. Writing as a "professing" Christian he states at the outset of his *Muhammad at Mecca* that "in so far as Christianity is in contact with Islam Christians must adopt an attitude towards Muḥammad and that attitude ought to be based on theological principles"; but he (Watt) has attempted to "preserve neutrality" on the theological questions and has addressed his work "first and foremost to the historian." At the same time he claims that his work "presents Christians with the historical material which must be taken into account in forming the theological judgement" on Islam.[1] The professed intention to preserve neutrality on theological questions does not appear to have always succeeded in the work; and this appears to have been due mainly to the declared objective of providing materials for the Christians' theological judgement on Islam. The two purposes have obviously been at loggerheads throughout his treatment of the various aspects of the Prophet's life. The historian has suffered at the altar of the evangelist.

The need to recoginze the "extraordinary" in Muḥammad (ﷺ) does not mean that his life should not be the subject of critical and historical study. It only underscores the absolute need to be scrupulously just to the sources by not attempting to distort or misinterpret their texts and by not taking them out of their contexts. It also means that any unfavourable or adverse assumption should be avoided unless it is suggested by the clearest of evidence. The presumption should be that of "not guilty" unless proved otherwise, not that of "guilty" unless shown to the contrary.

1. Watt, *M. at M.*, Introduction, x.

Chabter XI

THE THEME OF JUDAEO-CHRISTIAN INFLUENCE

A good deal has been written on the theme of the Prophet's having allegedly drawn heavily on Judaism and Christianity in formulating his doctrines and teachings. The aim of these writings has invariably been to show, on the one hand, his preparations for the role he played and, on the other, to disprove the divine origin of the Qur'ân. Except for Abraham Gieger,[1] who concentrated on the supposed Jewish influence only, William Muir was perhaps the first modern scholar to advance the theory as a whole and did most to popularize it. Since his writings a number of works have appeared on the subject.[2] The sheer volume of these writings calls for an idependent treatment of it. The scope of the present work, however, allows only an epitomization and discussion of the main assumptions of Muir, Margoliouth and Watt.

I. SUMMARY OF THE ASSUMPTIONS

Muir says that Muḥammad (ﷺ) obtained his knowledge of Judaism and Christianity through his contact with the followers of those religions in Makka, Madina and the 'Ukâẓ fair, as well as in the course of his trade journeys to Syria. Even as a child he is said to have seen the Jews at Madina, "heard of their synagogue and worship, and learned to respect them as men that feared God."[3] Muir of course rejects as "puerile" the story of a meeting between Nestorius and the Prophet during his second journey to Syria leading Khadîjah's (r.a.) trade caravan to that place. Yet, says Muir, "we may be certain that Mahomet lost no opportunity of enquiring into the practices and tenets of the Syrian Christians or of conversing with the monks and clergy

1. Abraham Geiger, *Was hat Mohammed aus dem Judenthem aufgenommen*? Bonn, 1833.

2. Of such works mention may be made of (a) Wilhelm Rudolph, *Dei Abhängigkeit des Qorans von Judentum und Die Christentunm*, Stuttgart, 1922; (b) Tor Andrae, *Der Ursprung des Islams und des Christentum*, Stockholm, 1926 (Fr. tr. *Les Origins de l'Islam le Christianisme*, Paris, 1955); (c) R. Bell, *The Origin of Islam in its Christian Environment*, London, 1926; (d) K. Ahrens, "Christliches in Qoran", *ZDMG*, 1930, 15-68, 148-190 (also his *Muhammed als Religionsstiffer*, Leipzig, 1935; (e) C.C. Torrey, *The Jewish foundation of Islam*, New York, 1933 (republished, New York, 1967) and (f) A.I. Katsh, *Judaism in Islam*. New York, 1954.

3. Muir, *op. cit*, third edition, 15 (Vol. II, 1st edn, 8).

who fell in his way."[1] As specific instances of such contacts, however, Muir mentions only three, namely, (a) the Prophet's having heard as a boy the preaching of Quss ibn Sâ'ida at the 'Ukâẓ fair,[2] (b) the contact with Zayd ibn Ḥârithah whose ancestors, Muir supposes, had been exposed to the influence of Christianity and who, though sold as slave when a little boy, must have communicated whatever impressions he had of Christianity to Muḥammad (ﷺ);[3] and (c) the contact with Waraqah ibn Nawfal who, as Muir puts it, "had an acknowledged share in satisfying the mind of Mahomet that his mission was divine."[4] Muir further says that Muḥammad (ﷺ) must have noticed the differences and conflicts among the Christians and the Jews but nonetheless he obtained from them the idea of One True God, of divine revelation, of a Book and of a name, that of Abraham, which both Jews and Christians repeated with profound veneration and who was "the builder of the Ka'aba and author of the rites observed there by every Arab tribe." Muir also says that while in Syria the Prophet must have observed what is called "the national profession of Christianity" there. As a result of all these, concludes Muir, Muḥammad (ﷺ) thought of acting the part of a Christian bishop, "but on a still wider and more catholic scale."[5]

Thus suggesting the Prophet's contact with Judalism and Christianity, more particularly with the latter, Muir adds that since he (the Prophet) derived his information from the "orthodox party", the "ecclesiastics and monks of Syria", he obtained a "distorted" and faulty view of Christianity, particularly with regard to Mary and Jesus.[6] Had he been given a correct view, observes Muir, he would have become a Christian instead of founding a new religion. Muir therefore laments that "the misnamed catholicism of the Empire thus grievously misled the master mind of the age, and through him eventually so great a part of the eastern world."[7]

The views thus advanced by Muir were taken over and repeated by Margoliouth in his own way. As pointed out earlier, Margoliouth assumes large-scale trading activities on the Prophet's part. In the course of such

1. *Ibid.*, 20 (Vol. II, 1st edn., 18).
2. *Ibid.*, 15-16 (Vol. II, 1st edn., 7-8).
3. *Ibid.*, 34 (Vol. II, 1st edn., 49-50).
4. *Ibid.* (Vol. II., 1st edn., 52).
5. *Ibid.*, 16 (Vol. II, 1st edn., 8-9).
6. *Ibid.*, 20-21 (Vol. II, 1st edn. 19-20).
7. *Ibid.*

activities he is said to have picked up information, most of it, as Margoliouth puts it, from "conversations (e.g.) at wine-shop or from listening to story-tellers" among whom were "Jewish dealers who traded in clothes."[1] From such intercourse with the Arabian Jews and Christians the Prophet is said to have "derived a sort of biblical phraseology".[2] Also, he is said to have been so engrossed in business that "traces of this calling are found all over his Sacred Book."[3] Like Muir, Margoliouth also says that Muḥammad (ﷺ) got the idea of a Prophet, of divine revelation, of a Book, etc., from the Jews and Christians. Like Muir, again, Margoliouth states that the Prophet's knowledge about these two systems was faulty and "superficial".[4] Margoliouth adds, however, that as time went on the Prophet's knowledge about the biblical stories improved. There "is no question,", writes Margoliouth, "that as the Koran grew in bulk, its knowledge of biblical stories became somewhat more accurate: and though this greater degree of accuracy may have at times been due to the Prophet's memory, it is more likely that he took such opportunities as offered of acquiring more information."[5]

But while Muir laments that a "distorted" view of Christianity prevented Muḥammad's (ﷺ) ultimate conversion to that system, Margoliouth seeks to explain that outcome in terms of the Prophet's design and personal ambition. The part which the Prophet played, says Margoliouth, was "present to his mind for many years, suggested by conversations with Jews and Christians and Parsees", all of whom had "one thing which the Arabs had not: a legislator, who had acted as divine commissioner... Yet each nation ought to have a leader. Here then was an opportunity for a Prophet."[6]

Echoing Muir's statement that the Prophet observed and was impressed by the "national profession of Christianity" in Syria Margoliouth says that when he (the Prophet) visited countries where "the whole population was subjected to the law of God" he was convinced of the backwardness of his own country and of the need for reform which he decided to carry out by assuming the role of a Prophet and by means of a revelation which he saw as

1. Margoliouth, *op. cit.*, 60.

2. *Ibid.*, 58-59.

3. *Ibid.*, 69. Here Margoliouth refers to C.C. Torrey's *Commercial-Theological Terms in the Koran*, Leiden, 1892, without specifying the author and title of the work.

4. Margoliouth, *op. cit.*, 76-77.

5. *Ibid.*, 106.

6. *Ibid.*, 73.

"an indispensable preliminary of progress."[1] He did not think of embracing either Judaism or Christianity because, according to Margoliouth, Christianity "could not be dissociated from subjection to the suzerainty of Byzantium and Moḥammed was far too great a patriot to contemplate the introduction of a foreign yoke." Also, even if converted to "an established religion, he could not have pretended to such knowledge of it as older members possessed."[2] Hence he decided to reproduce the role of Moses or Jesus. "Being a cool-headed student of human nature", further states Margoliouth, Muḥammad (ﷺ) could see that "they were men, and what they had done he could do."[3] His plans are said to have been facilitated by the prevailing differences between the Jews and the Christians and between the latter's rival sects, and at Madina he "claimed that it was his mission to put them right where they disagreed."[4]

These Muir-Margoliouth assumptions have been adopted and developed by Watt. Thus he deals rather elaborately with what he calls the "relation of Islamic teachings to Judaeo-Christian sources" and states that "one of the theses" of his book, *Muhammad at Macca*, is that the greatness of Islam is largely due to a "fusion" of some Arab elements "with certain Judaeo-Christian conceptions."[5] He sets the theme on a wider plane and speaks about the influence of these "sources" upon the then Arabs in general, or rather on Muḥammad's (ﷺ) environment, as well as upon him individually.[6] Like his predecessors Watt holds that the concept of monotheism was derived mainly from Christianity and Judaism. Though not excluding the possibility of influence from the monotheistic groups like the *ḥanîfs* he discounts any "movement" as such towards monotheism[7] and asserts that the "premonitions of monotheism among the Arabs must have been due mainly to Christian and Jewish influences."[8] Like Muir and Margoliouth, again, Watt traces these influences through the Arabs' contact with the Jews and Christians in Arabia and with the Byzantine Empire, which was Christian and "whose power and civilization they greatly admired", and also with

1. *Ibid.*, 74.
2. *Ibid.*, 77.
3. *Ibid.*, 78.
4. *Ibid.*, 76-77.
5. Watt, *M. at M.*, 23.
6. *Ibid.*, 25-29 and Excursus B, pp. 158-161; and *Muḥammad's Mecca*, 36-38.
7. *M. at. M.*, 28; *Muḥammad's* Mecca, 37-38.
8. *M at M.*, 27.

Abyssinia and even Ḥîrah, which "was an outpost of the East Syrian or Nestorian Church."[1] Watt also repeats the Muir-Margoliouth assumption that the idea of prophethood was derived from Judaism and Christianity. The "idea that Hûd and Ṣâliḥ were prophets to 'Âd and Thamûd", writes Watt, "was probably a pre-Quranic instance of the application of the Judaeo-Christian conception of prophethood."[2]

Having thus spoken of the "indirect environmental influence" Watt comes to the question of "direct" influence and says that there is "good evidence" showing that the Prophet had a "monotheist informant."[3] This "good evidence" he seeks in the Qur'ânic statement, 16:103, which, it may be mentioned here, is cited also by Margoliouth to suggest that the Prophet had an informant.[4] This passage gives a lie to the unbelievers' allegation to the same effect by pointing out that the person they hinted at spoke a foreign tongue, but the Qur'ân is in clear Arabic.[5] Watt does not, however, cite Margoliouth. Instead, he adopts C.C. Torrey's peculiar interpretation of the passage[6] saying that it shows that the Prophet did not deny having a human teacher but only insisted that the teaching came from heaven[7]

Proceeding on the basis of that assumption Watt next develops in effect what Margoliouth says about the supposed growth in accuracy in the Prophet's knowledge of Biblical stories with the passage of time. Watt cites some seven Qur'ânic passages, which we shall presently notice, to show what he calls the "growth in accuracy of the acquaintance with Old Testament stories, particularly with regard to Abraham and Lot."[8] He adds that "there are a great many"of such examples of growth in accuracy, without of course citing them, and says that in view of these it is difficult for "the Western critic" to resist the conclusion that the Prophet's "knowledge of these stories was growing and that therefore he was getting information from a person or persons familiar with them."[9] In this connection Watt futher refers to the Qur'ânic passage 11:51 which says that neither the Prophet nor his peo-

1. *Ibid.*
2. *Ibid.*, 28.
3. *Ibid.*, 27 and Excursus B, p. 159.
4. Margoliouth, *op. cit.*, 106-107.
5. The passage is: ﴿ولقد نعلم أنهم يقولون إنما يعلمه بشر لسان الذى يلحدون إليه أعجمىّ وهذا لسان عربىّ مبين﴾
6. C.C. Torrey, *The Jewish Foundation of Islam*, *op. cit.*, 43 f.
7. Watt, *M. at M.*, Excursus B., p. 159.
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*

ple previously knew the stories of the prophets revealed to him. Watt says that the "embarrassment caused by such a verse to those who want to uphold the sincerity of Muḥammad" (ﷺ) could be resolved by supposing that he did not make any distinction between the "story" and the "teaching" implicit in it and by interpreting the term *nûḥî* (We reveal) occurring in the passage to mean we "cause to understand the teaching implicit in it or the significance of" etc.[1]

Reiterating the same views in his latest work and further citing the Qur'ânic statement in 25:4 Watt states that there might have been more than one informant for Muḥammad (ﷺ) and that the Qur'ân "does not deny that Muḥammad was receiving information in this way" but that it merely insists that the material thus received "could not have been Qur'ân, since a foreigner could not express himself in clear Arabic." Watt thus once again states that what the Prophet received from his informants "would be factual knowledge" but the "meaning and iterpretation of the facts" came to him "by the ususal process of revelation."[2]

Thus dealing with the topic of borrowing from Judaism and Christianity, Watt also recapitulates and expands the Muir-Margoliouth assumption that the Prophet had obtained certain distorted and mistaken notions of these two religions and those notions were reproduced in the Qur'ân. Avoiding Muir's insinuation against the "orthodox party" and the Syrian Church Watt says that "the particular Jewish and Christian groups which influenced the Arabs" had "many strange ideas". Examples of such strange notions, asserts Watt, are the Qur'ânic statement which "suggests that the Trinity consists of Father, Son and Mary". This statement, emphasizes Watt, "is doubtless a criticism of some nominally Christian Arabs who held this view". Watt further states that "much of the detail" from the Jewsih side also was incorporated in the Qur'ân, but this came "not from the sacred scripture but from secondary sources of various types".[3]

The same thing he repeats in his latest work saying that "some people in Mecca wrongly supposed certain beliefs to be held by Jews and Christians", namely, "that Christians took Jesus and Mary to be two gods apart from God, and that the Jews held 'Uzayr [Ezra] to be the son of God."[4] These

1. *Ibid.*
2. *Muḥammad's Mecca*, 45.
3. *M. at M.*, 27-28.
4. *Muḥammad's Mecca*, 2, 45.

Qur'ânic statements, asserts Watt, "are palpably false" because "these were beliefs held by the Meccans" and bceause, according to him, "it was not essential for God's purpose that false ideas of this sort should be corrected", for He addressed the Arabs "in terms of their existing beliefs" and that the Qur'ânic message could be communicated without correcting these beliefs."[1] Elaborating the same assumption Watt states that the Qur'ân addresses the Arabs in the first instance, speaking "in terms of their world picture", including even points in which that picture was "mistaken". As support for this statement he refers to the prevailing notion of the earth being a flat space and quotes some seven Qur'ânic passages to show that that mistaken notion was reproduced in the Qur'ân.[2]

Again, like Muir and Margoliouth, more particularly the latter, Watt states that Muḥammad (ﷺ), having observed the unsatisfactory social condition of his land and people, and having been convinced of the need for bringing about a reformation, thought that this could be done by means of a revelation or religion. As Watt puts it, Muḥammad (ﷺ) "may even have decided that this [the unsatisfactory state] could be got rid of by some form of religious belief."[3] Again, echoing Margoliouth in a remarkable way, Watt further suggests, though in a guarded way, that Muḥammad (ﷺ) launched a new monotheistic movement in order to avoid the political implications of adopting Judaism or Christianity — "for Christianity was linked with the Byzantine and the Abyssinian empires, and Judaism had support in the persian empire. In effect Islam gave the Arabs a monotheism independent of the empires."[4] Watt winds up his discussion by adopting in effect Bell's observation that for "the study of the life of Muḥammad it is hardly necessary" to delineate the relative importance of Jewish and Christian influences; for, he admits, "many details are disputed". "The main necessity", he emphasizes, "is to realize that such things were 'in the air' before the Qur'ân came to Muḥammad and were part of the preparation of himself and of his environment for his mission."[5]

Thus do all three of our scholars advance almost identical views with

1. *Ibid.*, 2, 44.

2. *Ibid.*, 2, 5-7. The Qur'ânic passages quoted are: 2:22; 13:3; 20:53; 51:47-48; 71:19-20; 78:6-7 and 79:27-33. See *infra*, pp. 301-319, for discussion on these passages.

3. *Ibid.*, 51.

4. *Ibid.*, 38.

5. *M. at M.*, 29.

similar arguments. In general these arguments revolve round the following five assumptions:

(1) The circumstantial or environmental influence of Judaism and Christianity;

(2) The alleged specific instances of Muḥammad's contact with particular Christian individuals;

(3) The supposed Qur'ânic evidence about his informant or informants;

(4) The supposed gradual growth in accuracy in the Qur'ân's narration of the biblical stories; and

(5) The alleged reproduction of contemporary errors in the Qur'ân.

The following is a discussion of the first four categories of arguments. The fifth, the alleged errors in the Qur'ân, is dealt with separately in the next chapter.

II. ON THE ENVIRONMENTAL INFLUENCE IN GENERAL

It is an acknowledged fact that there were Jews and Christians in Arabia; the former mainly at Yathrib (Madina) and the latter mainly at Najran. So far as Makka, the birth-place of the Prophet and the immediate scene of his activities was concerned, there were only a few Christians of humble social and intellectual status, being either slaves or petty retailers, and mostly immigrants. One or two original inhabitants of Makka like 'Uthmân ibn al-Ḥuwayrith and Waraqah ibn Nawfal had turned Christians, the former out of personal or political considerations, and the latter as a result of his search for a better faith. Also the Makkans conducted trading operations with such countries as Syria and Abyssinia where Christianity prevailed. It is therefore quite understandable that the knowledgeable section of the Makkan community including Muḥammad (ﷺ) had been aware of both Judaism and Christianity as systems of religion and did doubtless also know something of the common beliefs and practices of the votaries of those religions. Indeed all the three of our scholars, Muir, Margoliouth and Watt, are at one in stating, after all their arguments, that Muḥammad's (ﷺ) knowledge of Judaism and Christianity was at best second-hand, "superficial" and erroneous. Margoliouth even states that one reason why Muḥammad (ﷺ) did not embrace either of these religions was that he realized he could not pretend to such knowledge of it as its older members possessed. Now, this being obviously the most that the orientalists think was the level of Muḥammad's (ﷺ)

supposedly acquired knowledge of the two religions, the question that naturally suggests itself to the general reader is: Is it reasonable to assume that a person of Muḥammad's (ﷺ) intelligence and common sense, as on all hands he is admitted to be, would proceed to propound a new religion and challenge the correcteness of both the prevailing systems of Judaism and Christianity on the basis of a mere hearsay and superficial knowledge of them? The orientalists, although they spare no pains to prove ambition and preparations on the Prophet's part to play the role he did, would just not address themselves to this simple and natural question. The inherent weakness and inconsistency in the orientalists' approach lies in the fact they suggest on the one hand that the Prophet was ambitious and therefore careful enough to avoid the political implications of embracing either Judaism or Christianity and, on the other, that he was careless enough to proceed to found a new religion by picking up information from bazaar gossips and Jewish story-tellers at wine shops!

The fact is that it is as naive to say that Islam is an amalgam of second-hand information about Judaism and Christianity with some Arab elements, as it is absurd to suggest that the Prophet was not cognizant of the two religious systems. There is no doubt that the concepts of prophethood, revelation and of Allah as Supreme Lord were known to the pre-Islamic Arabs. The existence of these concepts does not, however, *ipso facto* prove that they were derived from the Christians and the Jews, though the latter undoubtedly possessed these concepts as well. In so far as the concept of prophethood is concerned, the memory of Ibrâhim as Prophet and founder of the Ka'ba which the Arabs universally cherished, and the Abrahamic rites like *ḥajj* or pilgrimage to the Ka'ba were unquestionably pre-Jewish and pre-Christian. Similarly the concept of Allah as Supreme Lord was known to the pre-Islamic Arabs independently of any Jewish or Christian influence. The concept was in fact a remnant of the teachings of Ibrâhîm which had spread in Arabia before the coming into existence of either Judaism or Christianity. So was the concept of *ḥanîf* as a worshipper of one God, which also finds mention in the Qur'ân.[1] The orientalists of course recognize the existence of the concept of Allah among the Pre-Islamic Arabs; and of late Watt pays special attention to this point.[2] But while quoting a number of

1. See *infra*, ch. XIV for a discussion of the orientalists' views about the *ḥanifs*.
2. Watt, *Muḥammad's Mecca*, 31-36.

well-known Qur'ânic passages that clearly show the existence of this concept of Allah among the pre-Islamic Arabs, and while quoting Teixidor's study of the inscriptions to show that belief in a high or supreme God was common throughout the Semitic Near East in the Greco-Roman period,[1] and thus trying to illustrate the Prophet's indebtedness to the prevailing ideas, Watt is very careful in not tracing this concept of a "high God" in any way to the so-called Judaeo-Christian influence. Nor does he explain how this particular concept came into existence and continued to survive among the polytheistic Arabs. He of course suggests, like Margoliouth, that the "archaic" religion or paganism was in the decline because, according to him, of a growing awareness of the powerlessness of the gods and goddesses.[2] Also, following others, he attempts to expalin the composition of the word Allah.[3] Yet, neither this nor the supposed decline in paganism does in itself explain the emergence of the concept of Allah as "high God".

As regards the concept of monotheism the Qur'ân, and for that matter the Prophet, accused the contemporary Arabs, Jews and Christians of having deviated from the original teachings of their prophets and of having degenerated into polytheism. There is thus no question of his having taken over the concept of monotheism from the Jews and the Christians, because he so unequivocally controverted and rejected what they said to be the teachings of their scriptures. In fact even a cursory glance at the Qur'ân unmistakably brings out two undeniable facts. In the first place, the Qur'ân does not claim any originality in the sense of presenting a new religion. It claims merely to revive and fulfil the same message which it maintains — and here is its originality — God has given to all the Prophets throughout the ages and to every people. More specifically it claims its teachings to be the same as those of Abraham, Moses and Jesus, about all of whom it speaks in glowing terms. Sceondly, it very uncompromisingly rejects and denounces the polytheistic beliefs and practices of the contemporary Arabs as also of the Jews and Christians. This two-fold and predominant notes of the Qur'ân are just the reverse of what the orientalists suggest. They are emphatic in saying that Muḥammad (ﷺ) had no first-hand knowledge of their scriptures. He had neither read them himself, nor was any Arabic version of them available at

1. *Ibid.*, 35., quoting Javier Teixidor, *The Pagan God: Popular Religion in the Greco-Roman Period*, Princeton, 1977, pp. 17, 161.

2. Watt, *M. at M.*, 23-24; *Muḥammad's Mecca*, 35. See also Margoliouth, *op. cit.*, 24.

3. Watt, *M. at M.*, 26-27. See also Hitti, *op. cit.*, 100-101.

the time. The Qur'ân, and for that matter the Prophet are, on the other hand, equally emphatic in saying that their teachings are essentially the same as those of the original scriptures of the Jews and the Christians. Secondly, the orientalists insist that Muḥammad (ﷺ) derived his knowledge from those of his contemporary Jews and Christians whom he happened to meet. The Qur'ân, and therefore the Prophet, insist that the contemporary Jews and Christians were mistaken and misguided and had deviated from the teachings of their original scriptures, particularly in respect of montheism.

The only conclusion which any reasonable and impartial observer can draw from this situation is that Muḥammad (ﷺ) did not make up his teachings by picking up information from here and there; for in that case he would have feigned originality, would not have traced his teachings to the previous scriptures or would at least have so chosen his audience as were not likely to detect the sources of his information. Secondly, he had not also taken his information from his contemporaries because he openly found fault with them and set about to reform them and to bring them back to the original teachings of the previous prophets. Thirdly, since, while saying that his teachings were the same as those of the previous scriptures, he at the same time stated that he had not read any of them, and since the orientalists also agree that he had not read any of those scriptures, his source of knowledge must have been something else than either a first-hand perusal of those scriptures or a second-hand knowledge of them obtained from his contemporaries.

Some of the orientalists, particularly Watt, of course suggest a third possibility, that of there being a monotheist informant or informants for the Prophet. This assumption, as already indicated, raises more questions than it solves. The so-called Qur'ânic evidence on which this assumption is based will be examined presently. It may only be noted here that the Qur'ân, far from indicating that the Prophet had any human informant, does just the opposite thing of denying such allegeation by the unbelievers.

It has also been suggested, particularly by Margoliouth, that the Prophet, having got the name of Ibrâhîm from the Jews and Christians, traced his teachings to him in order to claim precedence over both Judaism and Christianity. Further, it has been said that the Prophet's denunciation of the Jews and Christians began after his break with the former at Madina. These two suggestions are manifestly untenable. The Abrahamic tradition, the Ka'ba and the rites connected with them existed there for ages before the

Prophet's brith. If he had invented the tradition and thus related his teachings to Ibrâhîm, he (the Prophet) would have been simply ridiculed not only by his adversaries but also by his followers. Secondly, the rejection of the Biblical teachings about the sonship or fathership of God and the assertion that both the Jews and the Christians had deviated from the teachings of their original scriptures had been very distinctly made in the Makkan *sûrahs* of the Qur'ân long before the migration to Madina and the subsequent development of enmity with the Jews of that place.

The truth is that it was impossible to get an impression of monotheism by any amount of observation of and acquaintance with the Judaism and Christianity of the day. Even a perusal of the extant scriptures would have hardly conveyed such an impression. The God in the Old Testament is depicted essentially as a tribal or racial god, openly partial to the children of Israel. Such a God could scarcely attract the imagination, far less the adoration, of a non-Israelite population. The text of the New Testament, on the other hand, obscured and blurred the concept of One God by inextricably tying it with the manifestly difficult and admittedly mysterious doctrine of the Trinity which conceives God not in easily understandable Unity but in "God the Father", "God the son" and "God the Holy Ghost", these three being not disinct qualities of a single entity but three separate entities. Moreover, the doctrine of incarnation on which the concept of "God the son" rests is essentially no different from the same doctrine of the Hindus. Like the Christian, a modern Hindu, while acknowledging the existence of many gods and goddesses and a sort of Trinity in the coexistence of Brahma, Vishnu and Śiva, would equally assiduously assert that his sacred texts do in the ultimate analysis speak of One and Only True God,[1] though a nòn-Hindu finds it difficult to accept that Hinduism inculcates monotheism. And so far as the practices of the Jews and Christians of the time were concerned, they were acknowledgedly steeped in the most debasing corruptions and superstitions and were thus the farthest removed from being model monotheists. Muir indirectly admits this fact when he squarely decries what he calls the "misnamed catholicism" of the Empire and the "orthodox party" of the Syrian church. The situation indeed continued to deteriorate for several centuries after the emergence of Islam. In fact the various reform movements in

1. See for instance the modern Vedantists' views, particularly the views expressed by Dvendranath Thakur and his associates in the mid-nineteenth century, M.M. Ali, *The Bengali Reaction to Christian Missionary Activities, 1833-1857*, Chittagong, 1965, chaps. II and III.

Christianity, particularly the Cluniac Movement, the Iconoclastic Movement and the Reformation started by Martin Luther bear an eloquent testimony to the depth of degradation into which the Chrisians and Christianity of the day had descended. In a way, all these reform movements and the subsequent emphasis on monothesism, in spite of an adherence to the doctrines of the Trinity and the divinity of Christ, are by and large an impact of the uncompromising monotheism enunciated and propagated by Islam. In any case, so far as the state of Christianity in the 7th-8th century Syria and the neighbouring lands was concerned, it was more likely to repel than to attract any outside observer. Truly has it been said that the "self-conceit" which deludes one to assume that the spectacle of "national" profession of Christianity in Syria impressed the "young reformer" (Muḥammad, ﷺ) has no foundation in historical fact.[1]

III. THE ALLEGED INSTANCES OF CONTACT WITH JUDAEO-CHRISTIAN EXPERTS

The orientalists emphasize the well-known facts of the Prophet's two journeys to Syria, once in company with his uncle when about twelve years of age, and again as leader of Khadîjah's (r.a.) caravan when about twenty-five years of age. On both these occasions he is said to have come across a Christian monk, Baḥîra on the first occasion and Nestorius on the second. As already pointed out, doubts and improbabilities surround these traditions and the orientalists themselves, particularly Muir, reject the stories as "puerile". Nevertheless he assumes that Muḥammad (ﷺ) "lost no opportunity of enquiring into the practices and tenets of the Syrian Christians or conversing with the monks and clergy who fell in his way." The same assumption is made in a more exaggerated way by Margoliouth; while Watt also subscribes to the view by saying: Muḥammad had presumably some contact with Christians on his trading journeys to Syria."[2]

It must be emphasized that the trade journeys were made to a predominantly or wholly Christian land. There is thus no question of not making any contact with Christians. What is necessary to note is that there is no reference whatsoever in the sources to the Prophet's having taken advantage of those journeys to seek information about Christianity from any par-

1. Huart, "Une nouvelle Source du Koran", *Jurnal Asiatique*, 1904, p. 129. See also Goerges Sale. *Observations Historiques et Critiques sur le Mahometisme*, pp. 68-71.

2. Watt, *Muḥammad's Mecca*, 36.

ticular monk or any individual Christian. Even the doubtful accounts of meetings with Baḥîra and Nestorius speak only of the enquiries and opinions of those two individuals, and not at all of the Prophet himself. Also, on the occacsion of the reported meeting with Baḥîra the Prophet was a mere boy of twelve and therefore unlikely to engage in any serious academic discussion. Nor could the nature of the journeys afford him any leisure to seek diversion in such educational exercises. If he had made any such educational contact, it would not have remained unnoticed by the scores of others of the leading men of Makka who had accompanied him on both the occasions and many of whom subsequently opposed his mission. Yet, we find from the Qur'ân that the unbelieving Quraysh leaders accused the Prophet of having allegedly received instructions only from a foreigner who happened to be in Makka and further alleged that a group of other people, also presumably in the city, composed the text of the revelation for him and read it unto him morning and evening. Had Muḥammad (ﷺ) contacted during his trade journeys to Syria any Christian monk or layman for obtaining information or even for casual discussion, the Quraysh opponents, many of whom had accompanied him to Syria, would not have failed to make the most of it in their attack against him. That no such allegation was made by them is a decisive proof that he had not sought information about Christianity or Judaism from anyone in the course of his journeys to Syria.

The second so-called instance is the tradition relating to Quss ibn Sâ'ida to which Muir refers specifically and Margoliouth alludes indirectly. It is stated that the Prophet heard Quss preach at the 'Ukâẓ fair.[1] This tradition is unanimously classified as spurious and is rejected as such.[2] Specially, one of its narrators, Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥallâj al-Lakhmî, is condemned as a confirmed liar (*kadhdhâb*).[3] And even according to this spurious report, the

1. The tradition is recorded in a number of works. See for instance 'Abû al-Qâsim Sulaymân ibn Aḥmad al-Ṭabarânî, *Al-Mu'jam al-Kabîr* (ed. 'Abd al-Majîd al-Salafî), Vol. XII, 88-89; Nûr al-Din al-Hythamî, *Majma' al-Zawâ'id wa Manba' al-Fawâ'id*, Vol. IX, Beirut, 1986 / 1406, pp. 421-422; Al-Bayhaqî, *Dalâ'il al-Nubuwwah*, Vol. I., 453, 454-456 and 457-465.

2. See for instance 'Abû al-Faraj ibn al-Jawzî, *Al-Mawḍû'ât*, Vol. I, 213-214; Al-Suyûṭî, *Al-La'âli al-Maṣnû'ah*, Vol. I., 183-192; 'Abû al-Ḥasan 'Alî ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Iraq al-Kanânî (907-963), *Tanzîh al-Sharî'ah al-Marfû'ah 'an al-'Aḥâdîth al-Shanî'ah al-Mawḍû'ah*, Vol. I., 3rd impression, Beirut, 1981, pp. 241-243.

3. See for instance Al-Dhahabi, *Mîzân al-'I'tidâl Fî Naqd al-Rijâl* (ed. 'Ali Muḥammad al-Bejjawî), Vol. III, No. 7351, p. 509; *Al-'Iṣâbah*, Vol. III., pp. 279-280 (no. 7349).

Prophet was only one of the audience and did not make any enquiries as such with the speaker. The orientalists' use of this report without any indication of its weakness and untrustworthiness is indicative of how such materials are uncritically accepted and cited to support a particular assumption.

Similarly weak is the "instance" of Zayd ibn Ḥârithah of which Muir makes special mention. It is to be observed that Muir tactfully refrains from saying directly that Zayd or his parents were Christians, but indirectly introduces the subject by saying that Christianity had made progress among Zayd's ancestors and then suggests that Zayd, though a boy when sold as slave, must have remembered something of Christianity and must have communicated that knowledge to his foster father Muḥammad (ﷺ). Nothing-could be a more far-fetched inference than this; for whatever the boy Zayd had learnt about Christianity and of that whatever he could have managed to remember after his disconnection with that system for at least a quarter of a century, could be of very little use to any serious enquirer and would-be-reformer. Moreover, had Zayd acted in any way as teacher in Christianity for the Prophet and had the latter formulated his doctrines on the basis of the knowledge imparted to him by Zayd, the latter would surely have no genuine faith in the Prophet's mission and would not have followed him so dedicatedly till his death.

As regards the instance of Waraqah ibn Nawfal, great emphasis has indeed been placed on it by the orientalists. There is no doubt that Khadîjah (r.a.) took the Prophet, shortly after his receipt of the first revelation, to Waraqah for consultation. This fact, as already pointed out, shows on the one hand that the Prophet did not entertain any intention or ambition to play the role of a prophet. On the other hand it shows that on his part Waraqah also considered him a sincere and unpretentious person. Had the Prophet previously received instruction in Christianity from Waraqah he would have formed a very different opinion about the former. In fact, except for this meeting, there is no indication in the sources of the Prophet's having previously consulted Waraqah on any subject, though under the circumstances it is reasonable to assume that the two knew each other from close quarters. The same reason which has been indicated above in connection with the Prophet's journey to Syria and his alleged acquisition of Christian knowledge in the course of that journey may be adduced the more strongly in the present case. Had the Prophet been in the habit of receiving instruction in Christianity from Waraqah, that would have formed a very strong point in

the Quraysh leaders' attack on and criticism of the Prophet.

IV. THE SUPPOSED QURA'ÂNIC EVIDENCE ABOUT A MONOTHEIST INFORMANT OR INFORMANTS

This brings us to the subject of the Qur'ânic statement about the Makkan leaders' allegation that the Prophet receieved instruction from others. It is mainly on this allegation of the unbelievers that Watt and his predecessors have based the assumption of a monotheist informant or informants for the Prophet. In doing so, however, Watt, or rather C.C. Torrey, from whom he has taken his cue, has grossly misinterpreted the Qur'ânic texts. To see how this has been done it is necessary to quote in original the couple of passages cited by Watt in support of this assumption. These passages, together with Watt's translation, stand as follows:

١ - ﴿ ولقد نعلم أنهم يقولون إنما يعلّمه بشر لسان الذى يلحدون إليه أعجميّ وهذا لسان عربيّ مبين ﴾
النحل (١٦ : ١٠٣)

"We know they say, It is only a person teaches him. The tongue of the one they hint at is foreign, but this (the Qur'ân) is (in) a clear Arabic tongue." (*Muḥammad's Mecca*, 45)

٢ - ﴿ وقال الذين كفروا إن هذا إلا إفك افترىه وأعانه عليه قوم ءاخرون فقد جاءو ظلما وزورا * وقالوا أسطير الأولين اكتتبها فهى تملىٰ عليه بكرة وأصيلا ﴾ الفرقان (٢٥ : ٤- ٥)

"The unbelievers say: This is only a falsehood he invented; other people helped him with it... They said, Old-World fables, he has had written down; they are dictated to him morning and evening." (25: 4-5)

Watt, following Torrey,[1] interprets these statements, particularly the first, saying "that Muḥammad does not deny having a 'human teacher but only insists that the teaching came down from heaven'."[2] Elaborating the same statement Watt writes in his latest work that "the Qur'ân does not deny that Muḥammad was receiving information in this way" but only "insists that any material he received could not have been the Qur'ân, since a foreigner could not express himself in clear Arabic". Hence what he was given by the informant "would be factual knowledge, whereas the meaning and interpretation of the facts would come to him by the usual process of revelation."[3]

This interpretation of Watt (and Torrey) is totally wrong. It is also an

1. C.C. Torrey, *The Jewish Foundation etc., op. cit.*, 43 ff.
2. Watt, *M. at M.*, 159.
3. Watt, *Muḥammad's Mecca*, 45.

attempt on Watt's part to fit in these texts, particularly the first passage, his notion of revelation (*waḥy*) which he describes as "prophetic intuition", a form of the Prophet's own "consciousness", something in the nature of "meaning" and "interpretation" distinct from the facts and words, etc. That notion of Watt's would be discussed when we come to the subject of revelation.[1] Here it should be noted that the most that can be made out of the first passage (16:103) is that there was a foreign person at Makka who had presumably had some knowledge of either Christianity or Judaism and who happened to be an acquaintance of the Prophet. Obviously this fact was taken advantage of by the Prophet's opponents to allege that he was being "taught" by that person to produce what was being given as revelation. The Qur'ân refers to this allegation by way of denying it and giving a lie to it. By no stretch of the imagination could it be suggested that the Qur'ân does not deny the fact of "receiving" information from the person alluded to and that it merely "insists" that the material thus received "could not have been the Qur'ân, since a foreigner could not express himself in clear Arabic." This latter phrase, "could not express himself in clear Arabic", is Watt's own interpretation or "tendential" shaping. The clear statement of the Qur'ân is that the tongue of the person insinuated is *'a'jamî*, i.e. "foreign". But even allowing this twist in meaning, does it at all sound logical to say that a foreigner, who could not express himself in clear Arabic, would nonetheless be able to instruct the Prophet, who by all accounts did not know any foreign language, in the details and subtleties of Christianity and Judaism?

In fact it is grossly misleading and somewhat inconsistent to say, as Torrey and Watt do, that Muḥammad (ﷺ) does not deny having a "human teacher but only insists that the teaching came down from heaven." If the insistence was that "the teaching came down from heaven", does it not constitute a denial of a human teacher? But the insistence was not simply on that the teaching came down from heaven. It was more strongly and consistently stated that the "text" of the revelation also came from heaven. In fact the main challenge of the Qur'ân was and has been to any one to come forward with a *text* similar to any of its *sûrahs*. The unbelievers' allegation also had reference to the preparation of the text of the revelation by the person they insinuated. The term *yu'allimu* (يعلّم) in contemporary Arabic parlance meant not simply imparting information but communicating a text which was usu-

1. *Infra*, Ch. XX.

ally committed to memory, tranmission of knowledge being at that time almost wholly oral. And because the allegation had reference to the text of the revelation, the denial of it is made all the stronger by simply pointing out the utter unreasonableness of the insinuation, that is, by pointing out that the person insinuated was simply incapable of producing a clear Arabic text. The denial contains also an element of ridiculing the insinuation. Indeed the nature of the unbelievers' allegation is more clearly specified in the second passage (25:4-5) quoted by Watt and to which we shall presently turn our attention.

Watt's interpretation of the first passage (16:103) is wrong in three ways. In the first place, it totally ignores the context which is that it refers to the unbelievers' allegation for the sake of giving a lie to it.[1] This context is clear not only from the passage itself but also from its two immediately preceding *'âyahs* (i.e. 101 and 102). Thus *'âyah* 101 refers to the unbelievers' allegation that the Prophet was a "forger" and then rebuts it by saying that those who indulged in such allegation did not really know. "They say, thou art a forger; but most of them know not". ﴿قالوا إنما أنت مفتر بل أكثرهم لا يعلمون﴾ The same denial is continued and stated in a positive form in *'âyah* 102 which emphasizes that the revelation was truly brought down from "your Lord" by the angel Jibrîl. "Say, it has been truly brought down by the Spirit of Holiness (*Jibrîl*) from your Lord." ﴿قل نزله روح القدس من ربك﴾. *'Âyah* 103, which is quoted by Watt, is merely a continuation of the same topic of the unbelievers' allegation and the same emphatic denial of it. In fact the expression: "And indeed We know they say" ﴿ولقد نعلم أنهم يقولون﴾, particularly the particle and pronoun *'annahum* (أنهم) clearly indicate this connection with the previous *'âyahs*. In his interpretation, thus, Watt ignores the context altogether and in effect simply adopts the allegation of the Prophet's adversaries.

Secondly, Watt is mistaken in saying that the Qur'ân does not deny what he calls the receipt of information from the foreigner. Leaving aside the context, the *'âyah* 103 itself contains an unmistakable denial in the term *yulḥidûna* (يلحدون). It bears a derogatory sense and a reproach, namely, that

1. It may be noted that Watt and his preceptor Bell tend to belittle the context in interpreting a Qura'ânic passage by assuming that the "unit" of revelation was almost always a short passage. But no sudden change of subject-matter, nor of style of language, nor of the form of address from third person to first person, etc., which according to them indicate the disconnection of a particular passage from its preceding or following *'âyahs* are applicable in the present instance.

of deviation from the truth and the just course, or perversion. All the competent authorities are agreed that *'ilḥâd* (إلحاد) means "falsely stating" or "falsifying", *takdhîb* (تكذيب).[1] In fact the very verb *yulḥidûna* occurs at two other places in the Qur'ân, namely, 7:180 and 41:40; and at both the places it clearly means a wrongful and unwarranted act.[2] Significantly enough. A.J. Arberry in his translation of the Qur'ân translates the expression at both the places as blaspheming — "and leave those who blaspheme His names" and "Those who blaspheme Our signs."[3] More important still, the Qur'ân itself uses the root-word *'ilḥâd* (إلحاد) in apposition to *ẓulm* (ظلم) or injustice at 22:25 ﴿ومن يرد فيه بإلحاد بظلم نذقه من عذاب أليم﴾ and Arberry rightly translates it: "And whosoever purposes to violate it wrongfully" etc.[4] Hence, though the orientalists translate the expression at 16:103 as simply "they hint at", its correct rendering should be "they wrongfully suggest", "they unjustly hint at", "they unfairly insinuate", or some such words. It may further be pointed out that the Arabic equivalent of "they hint at" is *yushîrûna 'ilâ* (يشيرون إلى), not *yulḥidûna 'ilâ (يلحدون إلى)*. Thus the correct meaning of the *'âyah* 16:103 should be: "We indeed know they allege that a human being tutors him. The language of the individual they unjustly insinuate is foreign, while this (the Qur'ân) is in clear Arabic." Thus, far from there being no denial of the allegation, the text of the *'âyah* cleary labels it as an *'ilḥâd*, an unjust insinuation.

Thirdly, Watt also ignores the decisive or rather silencing rebuttal made in the last part of the *'âyah* where it is emphasized that the language of the individual unfairly insinuated is "foreign". There is in fact a two-fold denial of the allegation in this single statement. In the first place, since the person spoke a foreign tongue, it was impossible on the Prophet's part, who did not know any foreign language, to follow that person's "instruction" or "exposition". Secondly as the Qur'ân is in clear Arabic, it could not have been com-

1. See for instance Ibn al-'Athîr, *Al-Nihâyah Fî Gharîb al-Ḥadîth wa al-'Athar*, part IV, باب اللام مع الحاء ; Al-Zamakhsharî, *Al-Kashshâf*, II, Beirut print, n.d., 429; Al-Qurṭubî, (*Tafsîr*), part VII, 328 and part X, 178 and Muḥammad ibn 'Alî al-Shawkânî, *Fatḥ al-Qadîr etc.*, part I, second impression, 1964 / 1383, p. 270 and part III, 195.

2. The two statements run respectively as:

﴿ولله الأسماء الحسنى فادعوه بها وذروا الذين يلحدون في أسمـئـه ...﴾ and ﴿إن الذين يلحدون في ءايـتنا ...﴾

3. A.J. Arberry, *The Koran*, O.U.P. (Oxford Paperbacks), 1986, pp. 165 and 495.

4. *Ibid.*, 336.

posed for the Prophet by that individual. Thus neither in the sense of imparting what is called "facts" and "information", nor in the sense of formulating the text and wording of the revelation could the foreigner act as 'trainer" for the Prophet.

The denial of the unbelievers' insinuation is continued in the immediately following two *'âyahs* (16:104-105). *'Âyah* 104 warns the unbelivers' of the evil consequences of their rejection of the "signs" of Allah, and *'âyah* 105 retorts by saying: "It is those who believe not in the signs of Allah that forge falsehood: It is those who lie" ﴿إنما يفترى الكذب الذين لا يؤمنون بئايـٰت الله وأولـٰئك هم الكـٰذبون﴾ . Thus 16:103 together with its immediately preceding and following couple of *'âyahs* constitute a distinct unit of which the purport is to deny and rebut the unbelievers' allegation in a very positive, forceful and unmistakable manner. It should also be noted that there is nothing in these *'âyahs* that warrants the assumption that the unbelievers were referring only to the receipt of information or facts as distinguished from their "meaning" and "interpretation", as Watt would have us believe. On the contrary the nature and wording of the denial, especially the emphasis on the language of the person insinuated, make it obvious that the allegation had reference to the Prophet's inability to produce, by himself, the text of the revelation.

This nature of the unbelievers' allegation is more specifically spelt out in 25:4-5 which Watt quotes and which should be considered along with 16:103. The passage 25:4-5 says that the unbelievers' allegation was that the Prophet had the text of the revelation, which to them was only "old-world fables", *written* for him and dictated to him morning and evening. It is noteworthy that in translating this passage Watt omits the last part of *'âyah* 4 which reads: ﴿فقد جاءو ظلما وزورا﴾ , "they have indeed come up with an injustice and falsehood." The omission has obviously been made to facilitate the presentation of the assumption that there is no denial of the allegation made by the unbelievers.

This passage 25:4-5 or rather this *sûrah* is unanimously regarded as earlier than *sûrah* 16 in the order of revelation.[1] This is all the more reason why the allegation contained in 16:103 should be considered in conjunction with

1. This *sûrah* (*al-Furqân*, No. 25) is placed between the 38th and 42nd in the order of revelation by classical Muslim scholars. On the other hand orientalists like Rodwell and Nöldeke count it as the 66th in the order of revelation, and Muir places it as the 74th. *Sûrah* 16 (*al-Naḥl*), on the other hand, is placed between the 67th and 72nd by the Muslim scholars; =

the allegation noted in 25:4-5. For it would be obviously absurd on the unbelievers' part first to suggest that the Prophet had the passages of the revelation written for him by others and recited by them to him morning and evening, and then to state that he had only obtained the facts and information from an individual. It is thus obvious that the allegation of incapacity on the Prophet's part to produce the revelation by himself had reference not simply to the "facts" and "information" but to the text and language of the revelation as well. But whether one likes to assume that the allegation had reference to "facts" and "information" alone, or whether one admits the obvious fact that the allegation had reference to both the facts and the text, the concluding part of *'âyah* 25:4, which Watt chooses to withhold from his readers, charaterizes the unbelievers' allegation as a manifest injustice (*ẓulm* ظلم) and a palpable falsehood (*zûr* زور). Nothing could be a stronger and clearer denial than this.

Watt rightly mentions that the Muslim commentators of the Qur'ân are not in agreement about the identity of the person of persons "hinted at" by the unbelievers and give several names, "mostly of Christian slaves" in Makka.[1] But he does not complete the story; nor does he pursue the questions that naturally arise out of his assumption. These questions are: (a) Why, after Muḥammad (ﷺ) had come forward with his claim to Prophethood and after he had passed some time in publicly calling people to believe in his mission — why any knoledgeable Jew or Christian should have come forward to help promote his claim by supplying him with

= while Rodwell and Nöldeke place it as the 73rd, Muir puts it as the 88th and A. Jeffery as the 46th. (See Muḥammad Khalîfa, *The Sublime Qur'ân and Orientalism*, London and New York, 1983, Appendix II; and Muḥammad 'Izzat Darwâzah, *Sîrat al-Rasûl*, I, Beirut, n.d. [1400 H.], pp. 145-149.

1. Watt, *Muḥammad's Mecca*, 45. Several names were indeed suggested. The most frequently mentioned name is Jabr, a Christian slave of Al-Fakîh ibn al-Mughîrah, who had embraced Islam. Ibn Isḥâq says that this Jabr was a slave of Banû al-Hadrami. Another name suggested is Ya'ish, a slave of Banû al-Ḥaḍramî or Banû al-Mughîrah, or of Banû 'Âmir ibn Lu'ayy. It is further said that Banû al-Ḥaḍramî had two slaves, one named Jabr and the other named Yasâr or Nabt. They were sword-smiths and the Prophet is stated to have occasionally visited them and talked to them. Ibn 'Abbâs says that the person referred to was Bal'âm, a Christian who had some knowledge of the Bible. According to Al-Qurṭubî, the person alluded to was a Greek Christian at Makka named Mysara. Another report says he was 'Addâs, a servant of 'Utḅah ibn Rabî'ah. A still another view is that he was Âbs, a servant of Ḥuwayrith ibn 'Abd al'Uzzâ. See al-Qurṭubi, (*Tafsîr*), X, 177-178 and Al-Zamakhsharî, *Kashshâf*, II, 429.

information about Judaism and Christianity? (b) Why the Quraysh leaders, with their power and influence and their knowledge and control of affairs of the then not very big town of Makka, and specially of their constant watch upon the activities of the Prophet and his acquaintances, why did they not make use of any such "informant" to expose the Prophet's "pretensions"? (c) If, on the other hand, such "informant" or "informants" were from among the Christian and Jewish converts to Islam, why should they have continued to have faith in the Prophet's mission and leadership when they found out that he needed their knowledge and help in formulating what he gave out as revelation from Allah? Significanly enough, Watt does neither raise these very pertinent questions nor does he seek an answer to them. If he did either, he would have found that the Muslim commentators have made it clear that the Quraysh leaders made the allegation in question in view of the existence in the ranks of the Muslims of a few Christian converts and that the Makkan leaders did not stop by simply making the allegation. They tortured a number of such converts in order to extort an admission from them to the effect that Muḥammad (ﷺ) had obtained help from them. It is further mentioned that one of such victims of oppression, Jabr, when persecuted and tortured to the extreme, gave out the significant reply: "It is not I who teaches Muḥammad, rather it is he who teaches and guides me."[1]

V. THE SO-CALLED GROWTH IN ACCURACY IN BIBLICAL INFORMATION

Indeed, it does not at all stand to reason that a person of Muḥammad's (ﷺ) intelligence and common sense would obtain from hearsay and secondary sources a perfunctory and superficial knowledge of the contents of the Judaeo-Christian scriptures, which is what the orientalists suggest at the most, and would then proceed, on the basis of that knowledge, to utter doctrines and stories claiming them to be divine revelation. Yet Watt, following his predecessors, not only advances such an absurd proposition but even goes further to suggest in effect that the Prophet was simpleton and rash enough to give out as revelation whatever little he learnt at first of a particular Old-Testament story and subsequently modified or improved upon it as he learnt more of it. Thus, citing a number of Qur'ânic passages relating to Abraham and Lûṭ (peace be on them) which will be considered presently and which he thinks show "the growth in accuracy of the acquaintance with

1. Al-Qurṭubi, (*Tafsîr*), X, 177.

Old-Testament stories" Watt concludes that "Muḥammad's knowledge of these stories was growing and that therefore he was getting information from a person or persons familiar with them."[1]

The passages cited by Watt are 37:135 C; 26:171 E(D); 27:58 E(D); 7:81 D-E; 15:60 DE; 11:83 E+ and 29:32 E+. It may be noted that Watt follows Flugel's numbering of the *'âyahs* which differs slightly from the current and standard numbering; but there is no difficulty in identifying the passages by looking at the meaning. He does not quote the passages in original, nor does he give their translation. Also, while citing only one *'âyah* of each *sûrah* he evidently has in view a number of them relating to the topic. The letters placed beside each *'âyah* are indicative of Bell's dating of the the passages, C standing for Makkan, E for early Madinan and E+ for Madinan period.[2]

It may be noted at the outset that the assumption of "growth in accuracy" is based essentially upon the above mentioned dating of the several passages. But this dating is acknowledged to be only "provisional"[3] and Watt himself entertains doubts about its accuracy.[4] Moreover, in his latest work he discards Bell's dating in favour of R. Blachere's which closely follows that of Nöldeke.[5] Also the way in which two letters indicating two different periods, sometimes one in brackets, are placed beside an *'âyah*, is confusing. It should also be noted that all the passages cited are counted as Makkan by the classical Muslim scholars. In any case an assumption of gradual growth in accuracy based upon a system of dating about the accuracy of which the author himself is in doubt and which he discards in his latest work is hazardous and misleading.

Apart from the question of dating, however, the passages themselves do not really sustain the theory of "growth in accuracy" as such. Thus the first point which Watt attempts to make is that in the two first mentioned passages (37:135 and 26:171) the member of Lûṭ's "party" not saved is "an old woman", in all the other passages it is his wife. This statement of Watt's is not correct and is clearly a misunderstanding of the two passages in question. The statement at both the places starts with *'illâ* (إلا except) which

1. Watt, *M. at M.*, 159 (Excursus B).

2. *Ibid.*, IX.

3. *Ibid.*

4. Watt, "The dating of the Qur'ân: A review of Richard Bell's theories", *J.R.A.S.*, 1957, pp. 46-56 (specially pp. 54-56).

5. Watt, *Muḥammad's Mecca*, 4.

shows that it is merely a continuation of what precedes it in the passage. It is to be noted that in the *'âyah* preceding at each place the material term is *'ahl*. Hence the meaning at both the places is that all of Lûṭ's *'ahl* except "an old woman" were saved. The primary meaning of *'ahl* is "family", even "wife"; while in a secondary or extended sense it may mean "people" or "inhabitants". This secondary meaning is clearly inapplicable here for it is obviously not the intention of the passages in question to say that all of Lûṭ's people were saved except an old woman etc; nor could it be suggested that among all those of Lûṭ's people who were punished and destroyed, there was only one old woman. The obvious meaning of the two consecutive *'âyahs* at each of the two places (37:134-135 and 26:170-171) is that all the members of Lûṭ's family were saved except "an old woman". Thus at both the places Lûṭ's relationship with her is expressed in an indirect way. The term "old woman" is used here out of disapproval of her unbelief, not out of an ignorance of her relationship with Lûṭ. In all the other places, however, the relationship is expressed directly and explicitly. There is thus no case of inaccuracy in the first two passages, nor of "growth in accuracy" in the other five passages.

Similarly ill-conceived is Watt's second point. He says that in the first four of the above mentioned passages there is "no awareness of the connexion between Abraham and Lot"; whereas in the other three passages "there is explicit mention of the connexion with Abraham."[1]

Now, a reference to the passages 15:60, 11:83 and 29:32 shows that "the connexion between Abraham and Lot" which Watt finds in them is only an indication of their contemporaneity. This comes out as an incidental detail of the manner in which God's wrath and punishment befell Lûṭ's people. The passages tell that God sent some angels who, on their way to Lûṭ's people, also met Ibrâhîm, gave him the good tidings of another son to be born to him and informed him that they were going to Lûṭ's people to punish them. Thereupon Ibrâhîm made some pleadings for Lûṭ. Obviously this incidental detail was not called for in the other passages where the theme and context are different. In fact the emphasis of the first four passages (37:135; 26:171; 27:58 and 7:81) is on God's favours upon the Prophets mentioned and how they were helped to emerge successful through their trials and the enmity of their own people. The emphasis of the other three passages (15:60; 11:83

1. Watt, *M. at M.*, 159.

and 29:32) is, on the other hand, on the conduct of the Prophets' opponents and the evil consequences of their opposition to and rejection of the message delivered to them. The first group of four passages are addressed mainly to the Prophet and his followers by way of reassuring and consoling them; the other three are addressed mainly to the unbelievers by way of warning them about the ultimate evil consequences of their disbelief and opposition. Hence in the first group of four passages no details are given of the retribution that befell the rejecters of the truth, nor is there a mention of the angels who acted as the agents of such retribution upon the people of Lûṭ. On the other hand, in the other three passages such details are given, including the coming of the angels through whose conversation with Ibrâhîm the so-called "connexion" between him and Lûṭ appears. There is thus here, again, no deficiency as such in the first four passages, nor any growth of accuracy in the other three passages.

It should be mentioned here that the Qur'ân refers to historical events and the stories of the previous Prophets not for the sake of narrating history or telling a story; it does so essentially for the sake of illustrating a lesson or drawing a moral. Hence different or the same aspects of the life-story of a particular Prophet are mentioned at different places; and nowhere is a particular historical event or the story of a Prophet narrated in full and at a stretch, as is usually the case with ordinary history or story books. This apparent repetition or incompleteness in the stories has been seized by the orientalists to advance the theory of "growth in accuracy". But a careful look at the passages, or rather the *sûrahs*, would at once expose the speciousness of the theory. It may also be pointed out that the mere non-mention of a detail, which is not called for by the theme and context at one place, and the mention of that detail at another place where the theme and context demand it, is no ground for suggesting inaccuracy in the first instance, and growth of accuracy in the second. Again, even the gradual unfolding of facts and details does not in itself prove that a human informant or informants were supplying information to the Prophet. The whole of the teachings of Islam in the Qur'ân, the rules and duties, are indeed spelt out gradually and over a period of some twenty-three years. To cite this fact as a proof of the Prophet's supposedly gradual acquisition of knowledge from some human tutor or tutors would be a height of presumption.

Apart from these reasons, a closer look at the passages shows that there is indeed no deficiency in information as such in the four first mentioned pas-

sages or *sûrahs*. For not to speak of the Prophets to 'Âd and Thamûd (Hûd and Ṣâliḥ) who are mentioned in them but who do not find any mention in the Bible, even with regard to Ibrâhîm such details are given in these *sûrahs* as are not to be found in the Old Testament. Thus it is in these *sûrahs* that Ibrâhîm is depicted as a propagator of monotheism and a very clear account is given of his struggles for its sake, his argumentation with his father and people over their mistaken beliefs, his denunciation and breaking of the idols, his ordeal by fire, his travel to al-Hijâz, etc. None of these aspects of his life-story is mentioned anywhere in the Old Testament. On the other hand, in the other three passages where a "growth in accuracy" is assumed on account of the mention in them of the coming of the angels and their conversation with Ibrâhîm, it is noteworthy that the Qur'ânic account of this incident differs materially from that of the Old Testament. For instance, it is clearly mentioned in the three passages under reference that Ibrâhîm grew curious about his "guests" (the angles in human forms) only when they declined to partake of the meal prepared for them, which led to their disclosing their identity and their further conversation with him including the giving of the good tidings of a birth of another son to him and their commission about the punishment of Lûṭ's people. The Old Testament, on the other hand, simply states that as soon as Ibrâhîm saw "three men" he "ran to meet them from the tent door", invited them to be his guests, and on their acceptance of it preapared a meal for them, "and they did eat."[1] Similarly they "did eat" the food prepared for them by Lûṭ.[2] Thus neither is a case of deficiency in information established in respect of the first four passages in question, nor is a case of dependence upon the Old Testament details proved in respect of the other three passages. In both the instances the Qur'ân goes beyond the Old Testament and also differs materially from it. Hence the sources of Muḥammad's (ﷺ) information must have been other than the extant Old Testament and any other human being conversant with it; and no theory of "growth in accuracy" can logically be sustained here.

Indeed, far from not denying the receipt of information from an "informant" or "informants", the Qur'ân throws out a challenge declaring that neither the Prophet nor his people previously knew the facts that were being revealed to him. Thus 11:49 says:

1. Gen. 18:1-8.
2. Gen. 19:3.

﴿تلك من أنباء الغيب نوحيها إليك ما كنت تعلمها أنت ولا قومك من قبل هذا...﴾ (١١ : ٤٩)

"That is of the tidings of the unseen, that We reveal to thee: thou didst not know them, neither thou nor thy people, before this..." (11:49)[1]

This *'âyah* together with some others to the same effect are some of the strongest Qur'ânic evidences showing that the Prophet had no previous knowledge of what was being revealed to him. Hence, as in the case of the Qur'ânic evidence in support of the Prophet's "illiteracy",[2] so in this instance too Watt has misinterpreted this *'âyah* in order to sustain his assumption. Thus proceeding on the basis of his assumption that the Qur'ân shows the Prophet's receipt of information from someone, Watt states that this *'âyah* 11:49 poses an "embarrassment" to those "who want to uphold the sincerity of Muḥammad" and then attempts to explain away this supposed embarrassment by having recourse to his peculiar notion about revelation (*waḥy*). He says that the facts and information about the prophetic stories came from human sources but the "teaching" and "ulterior significance of the stories came to Muḥammad by revelation".[3] But having said this Watt seems to recall his general thesis that even in respect of ideas and concepts the Prophet borrowed them from Judaeo-Christian sources. Hence Watt hastens to add that since "Judaeo-Christian ideas had become acclimatized in the Hijaz", the ideas that the Qur'ân "presupposed did not require to be specially communicated", but that the "precise form" in which they were to be "integrated so as to be relevant to the contemporary situation, could have been given them only by the prophetic intuition."[4]

It must at once be pointed out that the assumption of the Prophet's having received information from any human source is totally groundless and wrong. Also the Prophet and his people did not know the facts that were being given through the revelation. Hence the *'âyah* quoted above does in no way pose an embarrassment; nor is there any need for explaining away that supposed embarrassment by reducing the meaning and scope of revelation to merely "the precise form" in which the stories or the ideas were to be "integrated" so as to make them relevant to the contemporary situation.

That the Prophet was receiving the facts (as well as the text) through the

1. The translation is that of A.J. Arberry (*op. cit*, 217) with slight modification.
2. *Supra*, pp. 241-250.
3. Watt, *M. at M.*, 160.
4. *Ibid.*, 160-161.

revelation is clear from the Qur'ânic passages themselves. The key word in the passage quoted above (11:49) is *'anbâ'* (أنباء). Watt himself translates this word as "stories". Nonetheless he suggests that their "teaching" and "significance" only should be understood. This suggestion is made just for the sake of fitting in this *'âyah* with his assumption. The plain Arabic equivalent of *'anbâ'* is *'akhabâr* (أخبار); and both mean "facts" or "accounts"; and A.J. Arberry's rendering of the expression as "tidings" comes nearer to conveying the correct meaning. Indeed *'anbâ'*, when it emanates from God,[1] means "facts" and "true accounts" without the slightest doubt or untruth about them. But even if Watt's translation of the word as "stories" is allowed, there is nothing here or elsewhere in the Qur'ân to sustain the claim that it means merely "teaching" and "significance" to the exclusion of the facts. It may be noted that besides the various derivatives from the root, the word *naba'*(نبا) in its singular form occurs in the Qur'ân at some 17 places,[2] while the plural form *'anbâ'* in some 12 places.[3] At each of these 29 places it signifies facts and circumstances. It is not necessary to look into all these places. It will suffice if we look at only the two other places, besides 11:49, where it has been used with the same emphatic assertion that the Prophet had no prior knowledge of what was coming to him as revelation. One of these places is 3:44 which runs as follows:

﴿ذلك من أنباء الغيب نوحيه إليك وما كنت لديهم إذ يلقون أقلامهم أيهم يكفل مريم وما كنت لديهم إذ يختصمون﴾ (٣ : ٤٤)

"That is of the tidings of the Unseen, that We reveal to thee; for thou wast not with them, when they were casting quills which of them should have charge of Mary; thou wast not with them when they were disputing."[4]

And the other *'âyah*, 12:102, runs as follows:

﴿ذلك من أنباء الغيب نوحيه إليك وما كنت لديهم إذ أجمعوا أمرهم وهم يمكرون﴾ (١٢ : ١٠٢)

"That is of the tidings of the Unseen that We reveal to thee: thou wast not with them when they agreed upon their plan, devising."[5]

1. Watt does not of course admit that the revelation received by the Prophet was from God.

2. 5:27; 6:34; 6:67; 7:175; 9:70; 10:71; 14:9; 18:3; 26:69; 27:22; 28:3; 28:21; 38:67; 38:88; 49:6; 64:5 and 78:2.

3. 3:44; 6:5; 7:101; 11:49; 11:100; 11:120, 12:102; 20:99; 26:6; 28:66; 33:20 and 44:4.

4. A.J. Arberry, *op. cit.*, 51.

5. *Ibid.*, 237.

It is noteworthy that the last part of each of these two *'âyahs* beginning from "thou wast not with them" is an explantion of the *'anbâ'* given to the Prophet and it refers to specific *facts and circumstances*, not to mere "meaning" and "significance" of some facts.

The same emphasis on the Prophet's innocence and lack of prior knowledge of the *facts* that were being revealed to him is reiterated (though without the specific expression *'ânbâ'*) in another highly expressive Qur'ânic passage, 28:44-46, which runs as follows:

﴿وما كنت بجانب الغربي إذ قضينا إلى موسى الأمر وما كنت من الشـٰهدين * ولـٰكنّا أنشأنا قرونا فتطاول عليهم العمر وما كنت ثاويا فى أهل مدين تتلوا عليهم ءايـٰتنا ولكنا كنا مرسلين * وما كنت بجانب الطور إذ نادينا ولكن رحمة من ربك لتنذر قوما ما أتـٰهم من نذير من قبلك لعلهم يتذكرون﴾ (٢٨ : ٤٤ - ٤٦)

"Thou wast not upon the western side when We decreed to Moses the commandment, nor wast thou of those witnessing; but We raised up generations, and long their lives continued. Neither wast thou a dweller among the Midianites, reciting to them Our signs; but We were sending Messengers. Thou wast not upon the side of the Mount when We called; but for a mercy from thy Lord, that thou mayest warn a people to whom no warner came before thee, and that haply they may remember." (28:44-46)[1]

All these Qur'ânic passages (11:49, 3:44, 12:102 and 24:44-46) are unequivocal confirmations of the Prophet's innocence and lack of prior knowledge of the facts and circumstances he was giving out by means of the revelation to him. They also constitute irrefutable contradictions of the assumption that he received facts and ideas from human sources and then had had recourse to "revelation" in order to obtain only "the precise form" in which they were to be integrated so as to make them relevant to the contemporary situation. Also these passages are, as already pointed out, in the nature of challenges to the Prophet's contemporary adversaries who similarly insinuated that he received information from some human beings. It should be noted that every part of the Qur'ân was given out to the public the moment it was revealed. In fact the various allegations of the unbelievers and their rebuttal as they occur in the Qur'ân are themselves unmistakable proofs of instant publication of the texts of the revelations. And keeping in view the dates of revelation of the above mentioned passages, which vary from early Makkan to mid-Madinan periods (and Watt himself classifies the

1. *Ibid.*, 396-397.

first mentioned passage, 11:49, as C-E+, i.e., ealy Makkan to mid-Madinan period), it is evident that the challenge was repeated not only at Makka but also at Madina where there were a number of well-informed Jews who were against the Prophet. Yet, there is no indication in the sources of their having taken up the challenge in any way, nor of their having pointed out any individual or any other source from which Muḥammad (ﷺ) could have obtained the information. Nor, as already pointed out, could the unbelieving Quraysh leaders, in spite of their ceaseless efforts and inhuman tortures upon the few Christian converts at Makka, elicit an admission from them that they had taught the Prophet anything.

VI. DIFFERENCES IN THE QUR'ÂNIC AND BIBLICAL ACCOUNTS

That the above mentioned passages relate to facts and also prove that the Prophet did not receive the facts from any person conversant with the Bible is further evident from the factual differences that are noticeable in the Qur'ânic and Biblical accounts of the same Prophets. The first mentioned passage, 11:49, occurs in the context of the account of Nûḥ. Unlike the Old Testament, it is the Qur'ân which specifically mentions that he preached monothesim and called his people to the worship of only One God. Again, unlike the Old Testament, it tells that the deluge did not come except after Nûḥ had faced all sorts of opposition and troubles in the cause of his mission and except after he had become despaired of his people's ever receiving guidance, and also except after God had revealed to him that they would not believe. Thirdly, it is the Qur'ân which mentions that only those who believed in God were saved. The Qur'ân also refers to what happened to Nûḥ's son for his refusal to accept the truth and how he was drowned. Fourthly, the Old Testament says that God became somewhat repentant (?) for His having caused the devastation, resolved never again to do so and, in order to remind Himself of this resolution and "covenant" with Nûḥ, set a bow in the sky (rainbow), thus implying also the weakness of forgetfulness on His part.[1] On the contrary, the Qur'ân is remarkably free from such unworthy imputations to God. Also, unlike the Old Testament, it does not say that Nûḥ offered a sacrifice to pacify God's wrath.[2] It is more with reference to such facts as are not mentioned in the Old Testament but are stated clearly in the Qur'ân that it challengingly tells the Prophet that neither he

1. Gen. 8:21 & 9:11-16.
2. Gen. 8:20.

nor his people previously knew them.

Similarly the second passage, 3:44, comes in the context of the story of Mary and Jesus. The differences between their story in the Qur'ân and that in the New Testament are more remarkable. The passage itself refers to the incident of her care and protection. Secondly, the Qur'ân clears her of all imputations of being of an unworthy character and emphaticaly declares her purity and chastity and states that God selected her as the noblest lady for the extraordinary honour of being the mother of Jesus — "O Mary! God has chosen thee and purified thee — chosen thee above the women of all the nations." ﴿يٰمريم إن الله اصطفٰك وطهرك واصطفٰك على نساء العٰلمين﴾ [1] At the same time it makes it very clear that she was no more than a human being and that she was as much in need of praying to God as anyone else — "O Mary! worship thy Lord devoutly; prostrate thyself and bow down (in prayer) with those who bow down." ﴿يٰمريم اقنتي لربك واسجدي واركعي مع الراكعين﴾[2] As regards Jesus, the Qur'ân mentions even such of his miracles as are not related in the New Testament. For intance, his speaking to the people while he was in the cradle,[3] his giving life to clay birds by God's permission,[4] and the table that descended unto him from the heaven are mentioned only in the Qur'ân. Besides these, so far as the conceptual aspects are concerned, the Qur'ân categorically says that Jesus was no more than a Prophet, that he was not god,[5] nor a son of God,[6] nor one of the Trinity,[7] nor was he crucified.[8]

The third of the passages, 12:102, comes at the end of the story of Yûsuf which the Qur'an designates as "the most beautiful of stories" (*'aḥsan al-qaṣaṣ* أحسن القصص). This story is told in the Qur'ân throughout in a note of spirituality which is lacking in the Old Testament. The distinctions between the two may be best illustrated by placing some of the salient facts in both in juxtaposition as follows:

1. Q. 3:42.
2. Q.3:43.
3. Q. 3:46.
4. Q. 3:49.
5. Q. 5:19; 4:171
6. Q. 4:171; 6:101; 10:68; 17:111; 18:4-5; 19:35; 19:88-89; 19:91-92; 21:26; 23:91; 25:2; 37:152; 39:4; 43:81; 72:3 and 112:3.
7. Q. 4:171; 5:76.
8. Q. 4:157.

The story of Yûsuf in:

The Qur'ân	*The Old testament*
(1) The Qur'ân says that Ya'qûb's special love for Yûsuf was due to his dream and the former's notion of a great future for his son. (12:4-6)	(1) The Old Testament says that Ya'qub's love for Yûsuf was due to his being the son of the former's old age. (Gen 37:3).
(2) The Qur'ân says that Yusûf's brothers conspired against him before taking him out with them. (12:9-10)	(2) No mention of it in the Old Testament.
(3) The Qur'ân states that it was Yûsuf's brothers who asked their father to let Yûsuf go out with them. (12:11-14)	(3) The Old Testament, on the other hand, makes Ya'qûb ask Yûsuf to go out with his brothers. (Gen. 37:13-14)
(4) The Qur'ân shows that Yûsuf did not divulge his dream to his brothers. (12:5)	(4) The Old Testament says that Yûsuf told about his dreams to his brothers. (Gen. 37:5,9)
(5) The Qur'ân says that Yûsuf's brothers threw him into a pit whereform a passing caravan picked him up and subsequently sold him as a slave in Egypt. (12:15,19)	(5) The Old Testament says that Yûsuf's brothers first threw him into a pit and then took him out and sold him to a passing company of merchants. (Gen 23-28)
(6) The Qur'ân shows that Ya'qûb did not believe the story given out by his sons of Yûsuf's having been devoured by an animal. Nor did Ya'qûb become despaired of getting him back someday. (12:16-18)	(6) The Old Testament says that Ya'qûb readily believed his sons' false story, became despaired of getting him back and mourned his loss for a long time. (Gen. 37:33-34.)
(7) The Qur'ân states that it was 'Azîz's wife who attempted to	(7) The Old Testament says that 'Azîz's wife shouted and called for

seduce Yûsuf and shut the door of her room for the purpose, whereupon Yûsuf ran away from her. She snatched her shirt from behind which was torn as Yûsuf rushed towards the door. (12:23-25)	help whereupon Yûsuf left his clothes in her hands and fled (Gen. 39:12)
(8) The Qur'ân says that when in the course of Yûsuf's running away he and 'Azîz's wife were at the door, her husband unexpectedly arrived there. She then hastened to allege that Yûsuf had attempted to violate her honour and without waiting for her husband's opinion demanded that Yûsuf be put in prison or be appropriately punished. (12:25)	(8) The Old Testament says that 'Azîz came back home afterwards when his wife informed him of Yûsuf's alleged offence, saying that as she cried out for help Yûsuf left his clothes to her and fled. (Gen. 39:14-18)
(9) The Qur'ân says that Yûsuf defended himself then and there at the door telling the truth that it was she who had attempted to seduce him. (12:26)	(9) No mention of it in the Old Testament.
(10) The Qur'ân further says that a witness of the household pointed out that if Yûsuf's shirt was torn in the front he was to blame; but if it was torn in the backside she was guilty. (12:26-27)	(10) No mention of it in the Old Testament.
(11) As the shirt was torn in the backside 'Azîz realized the truth of Yûsuf's statement, asked him to pass it over in silence and also asked her to seek Allah's forgiveness for her sinful conduct (12:28-29)	(11) The Old Testament says that 'Azîz's anger shot up as soon as he heard his wife's complaint and instantly put Yûsuf into prison. (Gen. 39:19-20)

(12) Information about the affair nonetheless leaked out and the ladies of the town started whispering among themselves that 'Azîz's wife had attempted to seduce her slave. Coming to know of this whispering 'Azîz's wife invited the ladies to a banquet where at the end of the dinner she gave each lady a knife and asked them to cut the fruits before them. At the same time she asked Yûsuf to come out before them. They were so bewitched by the beauty and countenance of Yûsuf that each of them cut her hand with the knife instead of cutting the fruit each was holding. Exultantly 'Azîz's wife confessed before them her deed and insisted that if Yûsuf did not accede to her solicitation he would surely be put in prison and humbled. (12:29-32)	(12) No mention of the incident in the Old Testament.
(13) Yûsuf himself preferred going to prison in view of the persistence of 'Azîz's wife in her design. 'Azîz also put Yûsuf in prison in order to avoid an imminent scandal. (12:33-35)	(13) No mention of it in the Old Testament
(14) The Qur'ân alone says that when the King of Egypt sent his messenger to the prison conveying his decision to release Yûsuf from imprisonment and to appoint him to a high post, Yûsuf did not jump at the offer but demanded that the	(14) The Old Testament does not refer to Yûsuf's demand for public vindication of his innocence and says that he instantly accepted the king's offer.

affair which had brought him into prison be first enquired and his innocence publicly vindicated. (12:50)	
(15) The public hearing was duly held and Yûsuf innocence vindicated by the confession of 'Azîz's wife herself of her guilt as well as by the testimony of the ladies who had cut their hands and before whom 'Azîz's wife had also confessed her guilt. (12:51-52 & 12:32).	(15) No mention of these facts in the Old Testament.
(16) The Qur'ân ends the story by narrating how Yûsuf was finally united with his father and brothers and refers to the whole outcome as a realization of his dream. (12:100)	(16) No reference is made in the Old Testament to the final realization of Yûsuf's dream.
(17) Finally, The Qur'ân rightly terms the Egyptian ruler in this story as "King" and not as "Pharaoh", for the latter designation did not come in vogue before the 18th dynasty, more particularly before the reign of Thetmos III (1490-1436 B.C.)	(17) The Old Testament, on the other hand, throughout terms the Egyptian ruler as "Pharaoh".

These are some of the factual differences in the Qur'ânic and Old Testament accounts of the story of Yûsuf. A detailed comparison would reveal more such differences.

Similarly the fourth passage under reference, 28:44-46, comes at the end of a narration of some the facts relating to Musâ (Moses) (28:2-43). Incidentally, this account of the *fact* starts with the statement: "We recite unto thee some of the *nabâ'* (نبأ / story / account) relating to Mûsâ." The Qur'ân indeed tells the story of Mûsâ and his brother Hârûn, as also that of the Israelites in far greater detail than what occurs in the Old Testament. There are of course some similarities between the two accounts; but the differences and

the new elements in the Qur'ân are fundamental.[1] The most important distinction is that the Old Testament, though it represents Mûsâ as the "Law-giver", nonetheless accuses him and also Hârûn of several improprieties and ultimately depicts them as persons who had betrayed God and deserved His wrath.[2] It is even alleged that Hârûn was instrumental in introducing the worship of the golden calf. The Qur'ân, on the other hand, clears them of such accusations and emphatically asserts that they were God's chosen Prophets, were recepients of His favours, revelation and scripture, were free from the imputations ascribed to them and were men who sincerely and devoutly discharged their duties as God's Prophets by calling their people to the worship of the One Only God.[3] It also specifically mentions that it was the Israelite Sâmirî, not Hârûn, who was responsible for introducing the worship of the calf.[4] It is also in the Qur'ân alone that the story of Mûsâ's travel to the "meeting place of two seas" is given.[5] Again, it is only in the Qur'ân that the significant incident of the Pharaoh's plan to kill Mûsâ is revealed and it is further stated that a "believer" at the Pharaoh's court dissuaded him from carrying out his plan.[6]

Even with regard to details there are a number of differences. Thus, as the writer in the *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam* points out, in the Qur'ân it is the Pharaoh's wife, not his daughter, who rescues the infant Mûsâ from the river; instead of the seven shepherdesses in the Bible, it is only two in the Qur'ân whom Mûsâ assists; and instead of ten plagues the Qur'ân speaks of nine miracles. Also Mûsâ strikes twelve springs out of the rock, one for each tribe. "Then there are new features: Mûsâ repents of having slain the Egyptian. Mûsâ sees the burning bush at night and desires to take a brand from its fire..." The Qur'ân also mentions that the Pharaoh's magicians died for their

1. See for a summary of similarities the *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 1974 reprint, pp. 414-415.

2. Deuteronomy 32:48-52.

3. See for instance Q. 2:52-72; 7:144-145; 19:51-53, 57-73; 20:39-50; 21:48; 33:69; 37:114-122; 53:38 and 87:19.

4. Q. 20:85-86; 20:95-97.

5. Q. 18:60-62. The writer in the *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam* (p. 415) rightly says: "The story of Musa's accompanying a wise man on a journey seems without parallel."

6. Q. 40:26-45. The writer in the *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam*, thinking that some aspects of the story of Mûsâ originated in Haggada, writes: "The Kur'ânic story of a believer at the court of Pharaoh who wants to save Mûsâ is not clear." Yes; the comparison which the writer suggests, of course with a question mark, with the story of Jethro in Haggada is really *not clear*. The Qur'ânic account is quite distinctive, without any parallel in Haggada.

belief in God.[1]

Similarly with regard to the other Prophets the accounts of the Qur'ân differ fundamentally from those in the Bible. Some of the differences in the story of Ibrâhîm have been mentioned above. So far as Da'ûd and Solomon, two other great Prophets are concerned, the Bible in fact depicts them as tyrants, committing the most heinous crimes, indulging in pleasures and licentiousness and even snatching others' wives for illegal enjoyment![2] Prophet Lûṭ is even made to commit incest with his own daughters.[3] The Qur'ân, on the other hand, is singularly free from making any imputation of such frivolities to any of the Prophets. And so far as Dâ'ûd is concerned, he is represented as God's ideal servant on whom He bestowed kingdom, wisdom, scripture and power.[4] Similarly Solomon was favoured with the rare knowledge of the languages of birds and animals, in addition to power and kingdom.[5] Both are noble characters and God's Prophets.

Thus a comparison between the Biblical and Qur'ânic accounts of the Prophets makes it clear that the latter are not a reproduction of the former. There are of course points of similarity between the two sets of accounts; but the Qur'ân definitely presents a good deal different and original. Some of the orientalists do recognize that there are new elements in the Qur'ân. In general, however, their treatment of the subject suffers from three common drawbacks. In the first place, they seem to emphasize only the points of similarity almost to the exclusion of the points of dissimilarity or make only casual and secondary reference to them. Secondly, they spare no pains to identify similar facts or ideas in other ancient Greek, Hebrew and Latin works or legends and then immediately advance the suggestion that the Qur'ânic accounts are drawn from or based on them. It is overlooked that the mere existence of similar facts or ideas in a previous work, sometimes thousands of years old, does not *ipso fact* prove that a subsequent work is based on that work. Some further evidence is needed to show the contact or possibility of contact with, or understanding of thate source. This point is especially relevant in the case of Muḥammad (ﷺ); for it does not carry conviction just to suggest that he mastered the materials treasured in numerous

1. *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam, op. cit.*, 414-415.

2. For Da'ûd, Samuel II, 3:12-16; 4:4-5; 16:23; 18:33; and for Solomon see Kings I, 2:13-25, 28-35; 11:1-13.

3. Gen. 19:31-36.

4. Q. 6:88; 21:78-80; 34:10-11; 38:17-26.

5. Q. 2:102; 4:163; 6:84; 21:78-82; 27:15-44; 34:12-14; 38:30-40.

ancient works and sources, and that also in a multiplicity of foreign and even defunct languages, by means only of casual conversations with a trader in transit or a foreign slave in domestic service. For, that is the most that has hitherto been alleged about him. Nor is there any indication that Makka and its vicinity at that time possessed a good library or museum containing the ancient works and manuscripts to which the orientalists call their readers' attention; or that there were scholars and philologists in that place to unravel the secrets of such works to the Prophet-to-be. Thirdly, while casually recognizing that there are new elements in the Qur'ân, the orientalists do seem never to have paid attention to find out the sources of these elements. If they had done so, they would surely have found reason to see that the assumptions under which they have hitherto been labouring so diligently and impressively need revision.

Chapter XII
THE ALLEGED CONTEMPORARY ERRORS IN THE QUR'ÂN

The discrepancies and differences between the statements in the Qur'ân on the one hand and those in the prevailing versions of the Bible on the other in respect of the prophetic stories and other matters clearly militate against the theory of Muḥammad's (ﷺ) having allegedly drawn on and reproduced the Biblical materials. To sustain the theory, therefore, the orientalists have recourse to a two-fold plea, namely, that Muḥammad (ﷺ) did not himself read the Bible but derived his information about Judaism and Christianity from what he heard from others and that since his knowledge was thus only secondary, certain mistaken notions about these two systems prevailing at the time in certain quarters have crept into the Qur'ân. And as an extension of this latter plea it has lately been suggested, mainly by Watt, that not only some mistaken notions about these two systems but also the prevailing mistaken notions about the world and the universe have been reproduced in the Qur'ân.

The utter untenability of the original assumption that Muḥammad (ﷺ), and for that matter any reasonable person, would have proceeded to challenge the correctness of the two established religious systems on the basis of mere hear-say knowledge or that he would have ventured to formulate and promulgate a new religion on the authority of what his alleged private "informants" or "tutors" prompted to him, has been shown in the previous chapter. The present chapter deals with the remaining aspect of the orientalists' plea, namely, the supposed mistakes about Judaism and Christianity and the so-called scientific errors in the Qur'ân.

I. THE SUPPOSED MISTAKES ABOUT JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY

In dealing with this topic two things need to be borne in mind. In the first place, the Qur'ân does not really treat Judaism and Christianity as independent religions but as deviations from and corruption of the message delivered by God's Prophets. Hence there was no question of its stating what the modern Jews and Christians think to be the correct articles of their faiths. The Qur'ân is set to pointing out that what the Jews and Christians believed and practised at the time were errors and that their scriptures had been altered and manipulated to accommodate those errors and incorrect beliefs.

It also vigorously attempts to correct and rectify those errors. Secondly, it should also be borne in mind that what the modern Jews and Christians believe to be the correct doctrines of their faiths are not the same as those believed and practised by their predecessor Jews and Christians of the sixth and the seventh Christian century. Hence it is basically a wrong approach to say that the Qur'ân's descriptions of certain of the beliefs and practices of Judaism and Christianity are "palpably" false. For it is well-known that a number of "reforms" and modifications have been made in these faiths, particularly in Christianity, since the advent of Islam. The point would be clearer if it is noted that some serious Christian thinkers have lately advocated the abandonment of such doctrines as incarnation and divinty of Jesus,[1] the concept of the Holy Ghost as part of the Trinity,[2] etc. If any of these suggested reformulations of the doctrines of Christianity takes place, a future Christian scholar would as easily be able to say that the statement that "Christ is God incarnate" is a "palpably" false notion about Christianity!

That exactly is what Muir and others have done. Thus, while unjustly accusing the Qur'ân of having reproduced what they think mistakes and errors about Judaism and Christianity, they have not been able to avoid recognizing the fact that the alleged notions were those held by the contemporary followers of those faiths. Muir, for instance, places the blame squarely upon the "Catholics" and the Syrian Christians of the time; while Watt follows a cautious course and transfers the blame upon what he calls in his earlier work "nominally Christian Arabs".[3] In his latest work he further modifies the innuendo saying: "some people in Mecca wrongly supposed certain beliefs to be held by Jews and Christians" and that "these were beliefs held by the Meccans".[4] It must at once be noted that the beliefs and practices alluded to were not the suppositions of "some people in Mecca", nor were they beliefs held by "the Meccans" as such, but by the Meccan, Arab and Syrian Christians in general and that in pointing out those aspects of their beliefs the Qur'ân was not describing the tenets of Judaism and Christianity but was pointing out how the followers of those faiths had deviated from the original teachings of the Prophets.

1. J. Hicks, (ed.) *The Myth of God Incarnate*, London, 1977.
2. The protagonists of the Salvation Army advocate this.
3. Watt, *M. at M.*, 28.
4. Watt, *Muḥammad's Mecca*, 2, 44, 55.

As regards the specific instances of the alleged mistakes it is said that the Qur'ân suggests that the Trinity "consists of Father, Son and virgin Mary"[1], that it asserts that the Jews regarded Ezra ('Uzayr) as son of God and that it denies that Jesus died on the cross.

(A) REGARDING THE TRINITY

It is to be noted that the Qur'ân does nowhere state that the Trinity consists of "Father", "Son" and "Virgin Mary". Indeed it was none of the Qur'ân's business to identify the entities or "Persons" that constituted the Trinity. It simply denounces the concept as antithetical to and subversive of true monotheism. It is the orientalists', more particularly Watt's own supposition that the Qur'ânic passage which refers to the Christians' worship of Mary and Jesus, besides God, "suggests that the Trinity consists", etc. In fact Watt modifies his earlier statement in his latest work where he refers to the Qur'ânic statement somewhat more accurately, saying that it gives the idea that "Christians took Jesus and Mary to be 'two gods apart from God'".[2] The passage in question runs as follows:

﴿ وإذ قال الله يـٰعيسى ابن مريم ءأنت قلت للناس اتخذونى وأمى إلـٰهين من دون الله قال سبحـٰنك ما يكون لى أن أقول ما ليس لى بحق... ﴾ (٥ : ١١٦)

"And when Allah will say: O Jesus, son of Mary, didst thou say to men, Take me and my mother for two gods besides Allah? He will say: Glory be to Thee! it was not for me to say what I had no right to (say)... "(Muḥammad Ali's translation)5:116.

Here the Qur'ân simply disapproves of the worship of Jesus and Mary, besides Allah and also exonerates Jesus from having so advised his followers. There is no allusion to the doctrine of the Trinity here. Significantly enough, where the Qur'ân alludes to the concept of the Trinity, as in 4:171 and 5:73, it does not identify the entities that are supposed to constitute the Trinity. In fact the Qur'ân treats the two subjects, the Trinity and the worship of human beings as gods or lords, as two distinct themes. This is very clear from 9:31 which disapproves of the Christains' and Jews' taking their monks and ascetics as "lords" apart from Allah. The passage runs as follows:

﴿ اتخذوا أحبارهم ورهبـٰنهم أربابا من دون الله والمسيح ابن مريم ومآ أمروا إلا ليعبدوا إلـٰها واحدا لا إلـٰه إلا هو سبحـٰنه عما يشركون ﴾

"They take their priests and anchorites as lords apart from Allah, and (also) the Messiah, son of Mary. Yet they were not commanded but to worship One God. There is

1. Watt, *M. at M.*, 28.
2. Watt, *Muḥammad's Mecca*, 2, 45.

no god but He. Exalted is He from what they associate (with Him)." (9:31)

This passage is analogous to 5:119. Here again the worship of any other being besides Allah is condemned. There is a tradition which explains how the Christians and Jews treated their priests and monks as lords.[1] But apart from that question, no one would say on the basis of this passage (9:31) that the Qur'ân conceives of the Trinity to have been composed of the priests and the monks as one element, Jesus as another and God as the third!

That Jesus is taken for god by the Christians is an admitted fact. As regards the question of worship of Mary, it is a proven fact that not only the Christians of Arabia, but also many of them in the East and the West, particularly the Catholics, did and still do worship or adore her as possessing divine dignity. Watt ignores this fact presumably because it does not form part of the Protestant dogma. The point is ably explained by Muḥammad 'Alî who, in his note to the *'âyah* in question writes as follows:

"From the description of Mary being taken for a god by the Christians, some Christian critics of the Qur'ân conclude that the doctrine of the Trinity according to the Qur'ân consists of three persons — God, Jesus and Mary. But this is an absolutely unwarranted conclusion. Mary is no doubt spoken of as being taken for an object of worship by the Christians; but the doctrine of the Trinity is not mentioned here, while the divinity of Mary is not mentioned where the Trinity is spoken of. The doctrine and parctice of Mariolatry, as it is called by Protestant controversialists, is too well known. In the catechism of the Roman Church the following doctrines are to be found: 'That she is truly the mother of God, and the second Eve, by whose means we have received blessing and life; that she is the mother of Pity and very specially our advocate; that her images are of the utmost utility' (*Ency. Br.*, 11th ed., vol. 17, p. 813). It is also stated that her intercessions are directly appealed to in the Litany. And further, that there were certain women in Thrace, Scythia, and Arabia who were in the habit of worshipping the vrigin as a goddess, the offer of a cake being one of the features of their worship. 'From the time of the council of Ephesus (held in 431)', says the same writer, 'to exhibit figures of the virgin and child became the approved expression of orthodoxy..... Of the growth of the Marian cults, alike in the east and in the west, after the decision at Ephesus it would be impossible to trace the history.... Justinian in one of his laws bespeaks her advocacy for the Empire, and he inscribes the high altar in the new church of St. Sophia with her name. Narses looks to her directions on the field of battle. The Emperor Hera-

1. This tradition of 'Adiyy ibn Ḥâtim is reported, among others, by Imâm Aḥmad and Tirmidhî. See Al-Ṭabarî, *Tafsir*, X, 112 and Ibn Kathîr *Tafsir*, IV, 77. See also *Tirmidhî* (ed. Aḥmad Muḥammad Shâkir), Vol. V, p. 278 (*ḥadîth* no. 3095).

cleus bears her image on his banner. John of Damascus speaks of her as the Sovereign lady to whom the whole creation has been made subject by her son. Peter Damain recognizes her as the most exalted of all creatures and apostrophizes her as deified and endowed with all power in heaven and in earth, yet not forgetful of our race.' The Christian world had in fact felt 'the need for a mediator to deal with the very mediator', and thus Mary was raised to the throne of Divinity along with Jesus. The recent proclamation of the Pope relating to the bodily assumption of Mary supports this conclusion, and will raise a new question for the Christian world whether Trinity really consists of God, Jesus and Mary."[1]

(B) REGARDING THE STATEMENT ABOUT 'UZAYR

As regards the Qur'ânic statement about the Jews' taking 'Uzayr as son of God (9:30), Watt castigates it as the "chief error in the Qur'ân in respect of Judaism" and asserts that "while it is true that the Old Testament uses the term 'son of God' for the Messiah who was expected, there is no evidence that it was ever applied to Ezra."[2]

Of course there is no evidence in the extant Old Testament about it; but the Qur'ân was not referring to what is written in the Old Testament about 'Uzayr but to the belief and assertion of some Jews of the time who regarded 'Uzayr as the son of God. In fact the *'âyah* in question starts with the expression: "And the Jews say" (وقالت اليهود). The commentator Al-Bayḍâwî, to whom Watt refers a number of times in his book,[3] makes it clear with reference to this *'âyah* that because the Old Testament was given its present form by 'Uzayr, many of the Jews considered him a "son of God" and that specially at Madina there was a group of Jews who held that belief. Al-Bayḍâwî further points out that the *'âyah* in question was read out and recited as usual but no Madinan Jew came forward with a contradiction.[4] It is to be noted that this *'âyah* is unanimously regarded as Madinan. Hence the silence of the Jews of the place on the matter is suggestive enough, particularly as they were avowed critics of the Prophet.

Not only Al-Bayḍâwî but also other commentators mention that the *'âyah* refers to the views of a particular group of the Jews. For instance Al-Ṭabarî gives a number of reports together with their narrators specifically men-

1. Muḥammad 'Alî, *The Holy Qur'ân Arabic Text, English Translation and Commentary*, revised edition, Lahore, 1985, pp. 275-276 (n. 751).

2. Watt, *Muḥammad's Mecca*, 45.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 108, note 2 to Ch. 1 and notes 2 & 10 to Ch. III.

4. Al-Bayḍâwî, (*Tafsîr*), I., second Egytian impression, 1963, p. 412.

tioning the leading Jews of Madina who considered 'Uzayr a son of God. The most prominent of those Jews were Finḥâṣ, Sullâm ibn Miskham, Nu'mân ibn 'Awfa, Sha's ibn Qays and Mâlik ibn al-Ṣayf.[1] Similarly Al-Qurṭubî mentions the same fact and the same names adding that the expression "the Jews" occurring at the beginning of the *'âyah* means "some particular Jews", just as the expression "people told them" (قال لهم الناس) means not all the people of the world but some particular people. He further says that the Jewish sect who held that 'Uzayr was God's son had become extinct by his (Al-Qurṭubî's) time.[2]

Thus in respect of neither Mary nor 'Uzayr is the Qur'ânic statement an error or mistake. Nor could it be said that the Qur'ân was reproducing the popular and prevailaing errors and thus inveighing unjustly against Judaism and Christianity; for it refers to those beliefs as "errors" and points out the mistake in adhering to those errors. Hence if they did not really form part of the pristine religion of the Jews and the Christians, the Qur'ân was only emphasizing the truth.

Nor does the Qur'ân stop at pointing out those errors alone. It points out other errors too. Thus, (a) as against the Jews' insinuations and innuendo against Mary it unequivocally asserts her chastity and purity of character. (b) As against the doctrine of the Trinity it uncompromisingly asserts the absolute and immutable unity of God. (c) As against the Jews' and Christians' notion of sonship of God it emphatically states that God does not have any "son" nor is He "Father" to anyone as such. (d) As against the divinity of Christ it insists on his humanity and asserts that he was only a Prophet of God. Further, it says that those who worship him as god are "unbelievers". Interestingly enough, none of the orientalists has hitherto ventured to suggest that these Qur'ânic references to the prevailing beliefs of the Jews and Christians are also "palpable" mistakes due to its (the Qur'ân's) having adopted those "erroneous" notions from "nominally Christian Arabs", or "some people in Mecca", or "the Meccans"! The fact is that the Qur'ân refers to these latter beliefs of the Jews and Christans that prevailed at the time as well as to the other prevailing beliefs and practices regarding Mary and 'Uzayr and disapproves of each and every item of them.

The modern followers of the two religions have abandoned some of the

1. Al-Ṭabarî, *Tafsîr*, XIV, 201-204.
2. Al-Qurṭubî, *Tafsîr*, Part VIII, 116-117.

old beliefs and practices and, on the basis of that reorientation, some of them now come forward with the suggestion that the Qur'ânic references to some of the beliefs and practices of Judaism and Christianity are palpable mistakes and that therefore Muḥammad (ﷺ) did not himself read the Bible but gathered his information from hearsay. The point at issue, however, is not whether he himself read the Bible or did not read it. The issue is that the Qur'ân, and therefore Muḥammad (ﷺ), denounce as errors the prevailing beliefs and practices of the Jews and Christians, including even those that are said to have been sanctioned by their holy scriptures. Not only that. The Qur'ân asserts that the extant Judaeo-Christian scripture is a corruption and modification of the original text.[1] Clearly the source of Muḥammad's (ﷺ) knowledge and conviction must have been something other than either a direct or an indirect acquaintance with the contents of the Bible.

(C) REGARDING CRUCIFIXION

Similarly in its reference to the end of Jesus's career the Qur'ân does in no way reproduce a popular "mistake". On the contrary it asserts that the popular saying (*qawluhum* قولهم) about it is a mistake. The *'âyah* which refers to the matter runs as follows:

﴿وقولهم إنا قتلنا المسيح عيسى ابن مريم رسول الله وما قتلوه وما صلبوه ولكن شبه لهم وإن الذين اختلفوا فيه لفي شك منه ما لهم به من علم إلا اتباع الظنّ وما قتلوه يقينا﴾ (٤ : ١٥٧)

"And as for their saying: We have killed the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, the Messenger of Allah; but they killed him not, nor did they crucify him but it was made to appear to them as such. And certainly those who differ therein are in doubt about it. They have no knowledge about it, but only follow a conjecture, and they killed him not for certain." (4:157).

Clearly the passage sets out to contradict *their saying*, i.e. the saying of the Jews; for the whole narration here is about the Jews. The contradiction is made in a very positive manner. It is stated that they *did not kill him, nor did they really crucify him*. It is further stated that they, while claiming to have killed Jesus, themselves entertained doubts about it. The allusion is here to their doubts about the identity of the individual they put on the cross.[2] The passage then says that it was made to appear like that to them (شبه لهم), i.e.,

1. See for a modern western scholar's recognition of this fact, Bart D. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament*, Oxford University Press, New York & Oxford, 1993.

2. See for instance Al-Ṭabarî, *Tafsîr*, Pt. VI, 16-17.

Jesus's having been crucified and killed in that manner was an incorrect impression or illusion to them and that they had no real knewledge of what actually happened but followed only a certain conjecture. The passage ends with an emphatic reiteration that "they did not kill him for certain."

It may be noted that even some early Christian sects did not believe that Jesus died on the cross. Thus the Basilidans thought that some one else was substituted for him on the cross. The *Gospel of St. Barnabas* supports the theory of substitution on the cross. Another view, that of the Diocetae, says that Jesus had never had a real physical or natural body, but only an apparent or phantom one, and that his crucifixion was only apparent, not real. A yet another view, that of the Marcionite Gospel, says that Jesus was not even born but merely appeared in human form.

It cannot be said that in denying Jesus's cricifixion and death on the cross the Qur'ân adopts the view of any of the above mentioned Christian sects; for it categorically rejects the very basis of those views, namely, the divinity of Jesus and the theory of his phantom body. Rather, in view of the doubts and differences prevailing over the matter, it categorically asserts the truth and positively contradicts the Jews' assertion (وقولهم) that they had killed Jesus. The position is quite different from that of mere reproduction of a prevailing erroneous view. In fact, the Qur'ânic statement is directed against the Jews as well as the Christians. It contradicts the former's assertion that they had killed Jesus and that therefore he was not a Prophet because he suffered what is called an "accursed death". Similalry it rejects the Christian doctrine of the divinity of Jesus and that of "vicarious atonement" and its basis, the concept of "blood sacrifice".

The Qur'ânic statement that "they killed him not for certain" finds support even in the Bible itself. Thus:

(1) Jesus had prayed to God the night before his arrest to be saved from the accursed death on the cross (Mark 14:36; Matt. 26:39; Luke 22-44) and that his prayer was heard, i.e., responded to (He. 5:7). This means that he did not intend to die and that God did not allow his being subjected to the accursed death.

(2) There is nothing in the Gospels which may be taken to be an eyewitness account that the person crucified was dead when he was taken down from the cross or when he was placed in the sepulchre specially made for him.

(3) Pilate, who was in charge of the trial, appears to have grown skeptical about the justice of the whole proceedings and to have taken care to enable Jesus to escape death on the cross. The trial took place on Friday. Pilate purposely prolonged it and delivered judgement only three hours before sun-set, thus ensuring that Jesus could not be kept on the cross for more than a couple of hours at the most. For, with sun-set the Sabbath day would ensue and the condemned persons would have to be brought down from the crosses. Pilate also took additional care to see that Jesus was given wine or vinegar mingled with myrrh to render him less sensitive to pain. Thus Jesus remained on the cross for not more than three hours (Mark 15:25; John 19:14). This was evidently too short a time for any person of normal constitution to die on a cross. Significantly enough, the two other persons who were crucified simultaneously with Jesus are stated to have been alive when they were brought down from their crosses. Pilate himself did not believe that Jesus died in so short a time (Mark 15:44)

(4) After being taken down from the cross the two other men's legs were crushed, but this measure was dispensed with, according to the Bible, in the case of Jesus (John 19:32,33).

(5) Jesus, after being brought down from the cross, was pierced in the side of his body and blood rushed out of it (John 19:34), which shows that he was still alive.

(6) Pilate readily granted Joseph of Arimaethia's request and handed over Jesus's "body" to him. He lavished care on Jesus and put him in a special tomb hewn in the side of a rock (Mark 15:46); which was evidently a manoeuvre to deceive Jesus's enemies.

(7) On the third day the stone on the tomb's opening was found to have been removed (Mark 16:4), which proves that it had been removed previously, probably on the first or second day of the internment.

(8) Mary Magdalene, when she looked into the sepulchre, did not find Jesus there. She saw him standing and at first supposed "him to be the gardener". Then,

"17. Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father, and Your Father; and to my God, and your God. 18. Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and *that* he had spoken these things unto her. 19. Then the same day at evening, being the first *day* of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and

stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace *be* unto you. 20. And when he had so said, he shewed unto them *his* hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord." (John 20:14-15,17-20)

(9) It was in the same body of flesh that the disciples saw Jesus, his wounds still deep enough for a man to thrust his hand in (John 20:25-28)

(10) He was seen in the same flesh and bone. He still felt hunger and ate food as his disciples did.

"36. And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them and saith unto them, peace *be* unto you. 37. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. 38. And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? 39. Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. 40. And when he had thus spoken, he showed them *his* hands and *his* feet. 41. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them. Have ye here any meat? 42. And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. 43. And he took *it*, and did eat before them." (Luke 24:36-43)

(11) Jesus undertook a journey to Galilee where his disciples saw him (Matt. 28:10-17).

All these statements in the different Gospels strongly support the Qur'ânic verdict: "they killed him not for certain." Indeed the above mentioned Gospel statements clearly suggest that Jesus escaped death on the cross and therefore avoided being discovered by his enemies.

It is worth noting in this connection that recent research confirms that Jesus did not suffer death on the cross. Thus Barbara Thiering, an Australian scholar, has demonstrated convincingly, on a meticulous analysis of the Dead Sea Scrolls, that Jesus did not die on the cross.[1] Almost simultaneously two European scholars, Holger Kersten and Elmar E. Gruber, have assiduously pursued the story of the radiocarbon test carried out on the famous "Turin Shroud"[2] and have shown that Jesus did not die on the cross.[3] The end of Jesus is indeed a difficult historical and theological question; and

1. Barbara Thiering. *Jesus the man*, (first published 1993), Corgi edition, 1993. See especially the back-cover page.

2. The shroud discoverd at Turin and believed to be the garment with which Jesus was covered when placed in the sepulchre.

3. Holger Kersten & Elmar R. Gruber. *The Jesus Conspiracy The Turin Shroud and the Truth about the Resurrection*, Element Books Ltd, Shaftesbury, 1994.

it would just not be appropriate to cut it short, as Watt does,[1] by calling the Qur'ânic statement on it a popular error picked up from the bazaar gossips of Makka or Bosra.

II. THE ALLEGED SCIENTIFIC ERRORS

As an extension of the plea about errors in respect of Judaism and Christianity Watt has lately suggested that the Qur'ân also reproduces the contemporary errors about the nature of the earth and the sky. The Qur'ân, he says, addresses its first audience, the Arabs, in terms of their own world-picture and thus reproduces even points in which that picture was mistaken. In support of this statement he reproduces, in translation, some eight Qur'ânic passages and says that they show that the prevailing notions of the earth being a flat space and the sky being a solid structure, "presumably of stone", are reproduced in the Qur'ân.[2] Watt recognizes that different words are used in these passages to describe the earth and says that "all would be interpreted by the hearers in terms of their belief that the earth is flat." He adds that "there is no sepcial emphasis on flatness, since no one supposed that the earth would be otherwise."[3] He also suggests that such reproduction of contemporary errors was only natural, for, according to him, "it was not essential for god's purpose that false ideas of this sort should be corrected", "since the Qur'ânic message could be communicated to them [the Arabs] without correcting these beliefs."[4]

Before proceeding to take into account the passages cited by Watt in support of his assumption it is necessary to note the implications of his last mentioned statement about the supposed compatibility of God's purpose with the continuance of the prevailing scientific errors in the Qur'ân. In Making this statement Watt appears to reflect the modern Christian's attitude to his own sacred scripture. This attitude is an outcome of a growing awareness since the nineteenth century of the existence of a number of scientific inaccuracies in the Biblical texts. In view of these inaccuracies the opinion first gained ground that there was an antagonism between science and religion. Gradually, however, the notion of a text of revelation communicated by God gave way to the notion of a text "inspired" by God but written down

1. Watt, *Muḥammad's Mecca*, 45-46.
2. *Ibid.*, 5-6.
3. *Ibid.*, 5.
4. *Ibid.*, 2, 44.

by human beings. The Biblical authors, it came to be assumed, might have introduced inaccuracies to the text arising from the language of the day or from ideas and traditions still honoured and prevalent at the time; but that did not detract from their being divinely inspired.[1] "The scientific errors in the Bible", states an eminent modern Christian thinker, "are the errors of mankind, for long ago man was like a child, as yet ignorant of science."[2]

The modern Muslim, however, is neither in need of nor prepared for finding solace in such assumptions; for there is no discrepancy between scientific data and any of the Qur'ânic statements. As will be shown presently, the interpretations put by Watt on the passages he cites are totally wrong. And it is surprising that in advancing his assumption he has not taken into account, not to speak of a number of Arabic works on the subject,[3] even such a best-seller in Europe as M. Bucaille's *La Bible, Le Coran et la Science* which, appearing for the first time in 1976, had run into 12 editions within ten years[4] and had been translated into at least three other European languages including English and seven Asian languages before Watt penned his above mentioned statement.

(A) REGARDING THE EARTH'S SHAPE

As indicated above, in citing the passages in support of his asumption Watt recognizes that different words are used in them to describe the earth and that "there is no special emphasis on flatness"; but he says that all the expressions "would be interpreted by the hearers in terms of their belief that the earth is flat", for "no one supposed that the earth would be otherwise." This is really an indirect admission that the material expressions in the passages cited could be given the alleged meaning only if approached with a fixed notion or preconception that the earth is flat. Conversely, if there is no such preconception and if the expressions are approached with an unprejudiced mind, it would be seen, in Watt's own words, that "there is no special emphasis on flatness" of the earth as a whole. Also, a logical corollary of

1. The second Vatican Council (1962-1965) adopted a document which recognizes that the Books of the Old Testament contain material that is imperfect and obsolete. See M. Bucaille, *What is the Origin of Man? The Answers of Science and the Holy Scriptures*, 4th ed. Seghers, Paris, 1988, p. 15.

2. Jean Guitton (1978), quoted in *ibid.*, 10.

3. For instance Muḥammad Wafâ al-'Amîrî, *Al-'Ishârât al-'Ilmiyyah Fî al-Qur'ân*, second impression, Cairo, 1401 (1981) and Ḥanafî Aḥmad, *Al-Tafsîr al-'Ilmi li al-'Âyât al-Kawniyyah Fî al-Qur'ân*, Cairo, n.d.

4. The 13th edition was published in Paris in 1987.

Watt's premise is that a modern man would be no less justified in approaching and understanding the passages in terms of his scientific knowledge. If this is done, and it should be done, it will be found that the passages cited by Watt are full of unprecedented scientific significance not only with regard to the earth but also regading other matters.

The word *'arḍ* occurs in the Qur'ân some 461 times. Most of these uses are in connection with a description of God's absolute dominion over the entire universe and His power of creation. At a number of places the word clearly comes in the sense of country or dominion;[1] while at other places it is used metaphorically to denote worldly life.[2] The passages wherein it occurs with any description of its shape and nature may be divided into two categories. In one category it is mentioned in combination with or in comparison to the mountains and rivers. Here the emphasis is on how the earth has been made suitable and useful for man and other creatures. Here the listeners' or readers' attention is drawn mainly to the objects of nature and the land surface falling within his immediate view. In other words the *earth* in these passages means the land or land-surface falling within an observer's immediate view, in contradistinction to the mountains and rivers, rather than the entire earth as a unit. In the second category of passages the word occurs in relation to the sun, the moon, the skies and the universe in general. Here the *earth* is spoken of as a unit and the description really gives an insight into its shape, position and even movement in sapce.

In view of this general nature of the Qur'ânic use of the expression *'arḍ* Watt's treatment of the subject is partial and faulty in three main respects. In the first place, he concentrates on the passages of the first category and takes them to refer to the shape of the earth as a unit, which is not the case. Secondly, despite the diveresity and diffrences in the descriptive expressions in the passages he cites he imposes on them all identical meanings because, as he says, the "first audience" of the Qur'ân could not have supposed that the earth's shape could have been otherwise than flat. A really objective approach would have suggested greater care in understanding the precise implications of the different expressions employed in the passages. Watt even neglects to note the significance of a passage in its entirety, omitting its material part from his translation. Thirdly and more importantly, he does not

1. For instance in Q. 7:110; 14:13; 20:57; 20:63; 26:35; 28:57.

2. As in Q. 9:38.

at all take into consideration the second category of passages wherein the shape and position of the earth as a unit, as also those of the other planets and stars in the space are indicated and which contain astounding scientific data not known to man at that time.

That the term *'ard* used in most of the passages cited means the land surface falling within the observer's immediate view, rather than the earth as a planet, is very clear from 88:19-20 and 78:6-7 which Watt cites. The two passages run as follows:

﴿وإلى الجبال كيف نصبت * وإلى الأرض كيف سطحت﴾ (٨٨: ٢٠-١٩)

"And [to] the mountains how they are set up? and [to] the earth how it is spread out?" (Watt's tanslation) 88:19-20.

﴿ألم نجعل الأرض مهـداً * والجبال أوتاداً﴾ (٧٨: ٧- ٦)

"Did we not make the earth an expanse and the mountains pegs?" (Watt's translation) 78:6-7.

Clearly, at both the places *'ard* means the immediately visible plain land in contradistinction to the "the mountains". For, if the earth as a whole is implied, the reference to the mountains, distinct from it would be both incongruous and superflous here.

Let us consider the material words used in relation to *'ard* in all the passages cited. They are mentioned below together with Watt's rendering of them.

79:30 - والأرض بعد ذلك دحـها (*dahâhâ*) "spread out"

88:20 - وإلى الأرض كيف سطحت (s*utihat*) "spread out"

78:6 - ألم نجعل الأرض مهـدا (*mihâda*) "make an expanse".

51:48 - والأرض فرشنـها (*farashnâha*) "laid flat".

71:19 - والله جعل لكم الأرض بساطا (*bisatâ*) "made an expanse".

20:53 - الذى جعل لكم الأرض مَهدا (*mahdâ*) "made a bed".

13:3 - وهو الذى مد الأرض (*madda*) "spread out".

2:22 - الذى جعل لكم الأرض فراشا (*firâshâ*) "made a carpet".

Needless to say, each one of the expressions like *dahâhâ*, *sutihat*, etc., admits of a variety of meanings. Watt himself admits this fact in a general way not only with reference to these passages but also with regard to the others he has quoted by saying at the outset of his work that he has so selected the translation as "best brings out the points being illustrated by the

quotations."[1]

Now, the very first expression in the series *daḥâhâ*, is noticeably distinctive and different in genre from the rest. Watt, following many other previous translators, renders it as "spread out". But the exact and correct meaning of the term, keeping in view its root, rather provides a very positive Qur'ânic evidence in support of the spherical shape of the earth. For *daḥâ* means to "shape like an egg", its noun being *daḥiyah*, which the Arabs still use to mean an egg.[2]

The second expression, *suṭiḥat*, is equally significant. It is derived from *saṭḥ* (سطح) which means surface, outer layer, outer cover, roof, deck, plane, etc. Hence *saṭḥ al-baḥr* (سطح البحر) means sea-level, *saṭḥ mâ'il* (سطح مائل) means inclined plane, *saṭḥy* (سطحي) means external, outward, superficial, etc. Keeping these original meaning of the root-word in view and approaching the Qur'ânic statement at 88:20 with our modern knowledge that the interior of the earth is full of gaseous and liquid materials (lava) and that the land surface is only an outer cover resembling the skin of an egg, and that it is also a plane, it would be seen how very appropriate, scientific and significant is the term *suṭiḥat* used here in describing the land-surface of the earth, particularly after the description in the previous *'âyah* (88:19) of how the mountains have been set up. The Qur'ânic statement at 88:20 may thus be more appropriately and more accurately rendered as: "(Do they not look) to the earth how it hase been surfaced and planed?"

The third word in the series is *mihâd* (مهادا) and it may be considered along with the sixth in the series, *mahd* (مهد in 20:53) because they both belong to the same root. The former means resting place, abode, bosom, cradle and, figuratively, fold (in which something rests). And A.J.Arberry has very correctly translated the expression at 78:6 as "Have We not made the earth as a cradle?"[3] In fact this very word *mihâd* occurs at six other places in the Qur'ân,[4] and at each of these places it clearly bears the meaning of an abode, a habitat, a resting place, etc. In any case, even without regard to what we know of the interior of the earth, to translate the expression as

1. Watt, *Muḥammad's Mecca*, 2.

2. M. Fatḥî 'Uthmân, "Al-'arḍ fî al-Qur'ân al-Karîm", *Proceedings of the First Islamic Geographical Conference*, Riyadh, 1404 / 1984, Vol. IV, 127 (117-271); A.M. Soliman, *Scientific Trends in the Qur'ân*, London (Tâ-ha Publications), 1985, p. 16.

3. A.J. Arberry, *op. cit.*, 626.

4. Q. 2:206; 3:12; 3:197; 7:41; 13:18 and 38:56.

"made an expanse" would be quite remote from the original sense and would be inappropriate here.

Similarly *mahd* means bed or cradle. It occurs at four other places in the Qur'ân, once in connection with *'arḍ* (43:10) and thrice in connection with Jesus's speaking to men even while in the cradle.[1] And again, A.J.Arberry very consistently renders the term at both 43:10 and 20:53 as cradle. In fact he translates the statements at both the places uniformly as "He who appointed the earth to be a cradle for you."[2] Watt, on the other hand, is not so consistent. He translates the expression at 78:6 as "make an expanse" and at 20:53 as "made a bed".

Similarly inconsistent is his translations of the fourth and eighth terms in the series, *farashnâhâ* (فرشناها) and *firâsha* (فراشا). The primary meaning of *farasha* (فرش) is to spread out as a bed, to pave, to cover, etc.; while *firâsh* means bed, mattress, bedspread, cushion, carpet, etc. Nevertheless, while Watt has translated this last expression at 2:22 as "made a bed", he has rendered the word at 51:48 as "laid flat", though the farthest manoeuvring that could legitimately be done here is to render it as "spread out as a bed" or "laid out as a bed", but not quite as "laid flat".

There remain two other words to consider, *bisâṭ* (بساط) and *madda* (مدّ), the fifth and seventh respectively in the series. The same meaning of laying or spreading as a bed is appropriate for *bisâṭ*; and Arberry has indeed translated the whole statement at 71:19 as "And God has laid the earth for you as a carpet."[3] Watt, however, has rendered the expression as "made an expanse". As regards the expression *madda*, its primary meaning is "he extended" or "he expanded". It may even mean he "spread out", as Watt translates it. The word has been used in the Qur'ân in several other senses. At 84:3-4 the expression in its passive form *muddat* clearly bears the meaning of "is flattened" — "And when the earth is flattened and it throws off what is in it and gets emptied" ﴿وإذا الأرض مُدت * وألقت ما فيها وتخلت﴾. This is a description of what will happen when the earth (world) is brought to an end and the resurrection takes place. Hence the sense in which *muddat* is used here cannot be applied to the same term or its derivatives which speak about the normal situations of the earth and which therefore must bear a meaning

1. Q. 3:40; 3:110 and 19:29.
2. A.J. Arberry, *op. cit.*, 505 and 314.
3. *Ibid.*, 609.

other than "made flat". Conversely, this passage is an indirect pointer to the fact that prior to the event of the end of its existence the earth *as a whole* is not flat.

Leaving aside the differentials in meanings and accepting the renderings as "spread out", "made an expanse", etc., none of the eight statements cited does really say that the earth as a whole is a flat space, for the passages speake of the earth or land as it comes within the immediate view of an observer. Moreover, though the sense of making level or plane may be said to be common to all the terms, this sense does not in fact run counter to the spherical nature of the earth. The accepted geometrical and mathematical definition of "plane" is "surface such that the straight line joining any points on it is touching on all points."[1] Hence, inspite of the earth as a whole being spherical, its surface is nonetheless level, plane, spread out or even flat.

The inherent relativity of the expression *madda* or "spread out" applied to earth in such passages was indeed pointed out some eight centuries ago by Imâm Fakhr al-Dîn al-Râzî (544-606 H. / 1150-1210 A. C.) who was quite conscious of the spherical nature of the earth. Referring to the term *madda* used at 13:3 and 15:19 he makes two points. He says that the object of these passages is to bring home the theme of the existence of the Creator. The reference therefore has to be to such objects as are visible and obvious to the listener. Hence the term *'arḍ* in these passages has to be understood in the sense of the part of it which comes to the immediate view of the observer.[2] Secondly, he points out that the earth "is an extremely large ball; but a part of a gigantic ball, when looked at it, you will see it as a plain surface. This being the case, the difficuly of which they speak ceases to exist. The proof of this [explanation] is the saying of Allah: '(We have set) the mountains as pegs ﴿والجبال أوتادا﴾'. He calls them pegs notwithstanding the fact that there may be extensive plain surfaces on top of them. So is the case here."[3]

Far from reproducing or reflecting the erroneous world-view prevailing in seventh century Arabia the Qur'ân indeed goes beyond the scientific knowledge of the time and speaks of scientific facts and truths that have

1. *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*, ed. A.S. Hornby, 19th impression, 1984, p. 636.

2. *Al-Tafsir al-Kabir*, XIX, p. 3.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 170. The text runs as follows:

(فهي كرة في غاية العظمة، والكرة العظيمة يكون كل قطعة منها، إذا نظر إليها فإنها ترى كالسطح المستوي، وإذا كان كذلك زال ما ذكروه من الإشكال، والدليل عليه قوله تعالى: ﴿والجبال أوتادا﴾ سماها أوتادا مع أنه قد يحصل عليها سطوح عظيمة مستوية، فكذلك هنا)

only recently been discovered by man. In fact if Watt had looked carefully enough he would have seen that at least in three of the passages he has cited to support his assumption there are such extraordinary facts as well as significant pointers to the spherical nature of the earth. Unfortunately, while quoting these passages in translation he has omitted in two of these three passages those very portions that contain such facts. One of these passages is 13:3 which in its entirety runs as follows:

﴿وهو الذى مد الأرض وجعل فيها رواسي وأنهـٰرا ومن كل الثمرات جعل فيها زوجين اثنين يغشى اليل النهار إن فى ذلك لأيـٰـت لقوم يتفكرون﴾

"And He it is Who spread the earth, and made in it firm mountains and rivers. And of all fruits He has made pairs of two (of every kind). He makes the night cover the day. Surely there are signs in this for a people who reflect." (Muhammad Ali's translation with slight alteration)

In this passage there are two significant statements. The first is: "And of all fruits He has made pairs, two (of every kind)." The implication of this statement has become clear only in modern times with the discovery of sexes in plants and fruits, indeed of pairs in every thing.[1] In fact the statement has long been translated in that sense.[2] Needless to say that no one in the seventh Christian century did have any inkling of the concept of pairs or sexes in plants, fruits and other things; nor was it possible to comprehend the full import of this Qur'ânic statement before the scientific discoveries of modern times in this respect.

The second significant statement in the passage (13:3) is: "He makes the night cover the day." Unmistakably, the sense here is that of the night gradually taking the place of the day — a phenomenon which is understandable only with reference to the spherical shape of the earth and its rotation.[3] For, if it was uttered in the context of a flat earth, the statement would have been in the sense of the day and night alternating each other, not "covering the day with the night", as indeed Arberry translates it.[4]

The second passage is 20:53 which runs as follows:

﴿الذى جعل لكم الأرض مهداً وسلك لكم فيها سبلا وأنزل من السماء ماءً فاخرجنا به أزوٰجًا من نبات شتّىٰ﴾

1. See also Q. 36:36 and 51:49 on this point.

2. See for instance. M. Pickthall's and A. Yusuf Ali's translations and comments on this *'âyah*.

3. See below for other Qur'ânic references on this point.

4. Arberry, *op. cit.*, 239.

"He Who made the earth a cradle for you and threaded for you in it routes; and sent down from the sky water. Thus have We produced thereby pairs of plants, each different from the other."

The scientific truth about sexes in plants is stated here more pointedly and explicitly, thus supplementing the information contained in 13:3 noted above.

The third of the passages is 51:47-48. It runs as follows:

﴿ والسماء بنينها بأييد وإنا لموسعون * والأرض فرشنها فنعم المنهدون ﴾

"And the sky We have made it with Hands; and verily We are the expanders (are in the process of expanding it). And the earth, We have laid it out, and how Excellent are the authors of laying out!"

Here the expression "and verily We are expanders" ﴿وإنا لموسعون﴾ is very significant. Watt has rendered this part of the statement as: "and it is we who make it of vast extent."[1] But it is to be noted that the construction is in the nominative form in contrast with the verbal form of the immediately preceding expression, which is also in the past tense. It is a well-known rule of Arabic construction that the nominative form (اسمية) together with the emphatic *lâm* (ل) is used to indicate a habitual or continual act or process of doing. Thus the correct translation of the expression would be: "And verily We are expanders" or "We do expand" or "We are in the process of expanding it". Indeed A.J. Arberry is just correct in rendering this part of the statement as "and We extend it wide."[2]

Now, this statement assumes a great significance in the light of modern scientific information that the universe is expanding at a staggering speed. It says that everything in space (the skies) — the constellations together with their planets and satellites, etc., are all flying straight ahead at an unimaginable speed. The sun itself, together with its planets and their satellites as a whole are reckoned to be moving at the staggering speed of almost a million miles a day towards the constellation Lyra which itself is moving away at a similar speed! Thus the space, i.e. the sky (السماء) is continually expanding. In the light of this modern knowledge the Qur'ânic statement "We have created the heaven, and indeed We do expand it" assumes a bewildering significance, besides being surprisingly precise.

1. Watt, *Muḥammad's Mecca*, 6.
2. A.J. Arberry, *op. cit.*, 545.

Thus three of the eight passages cited by Watt to prove what he supposes to be scientific errors in the Qur'ân contain at least three such facts as run directly counter to his assumption. These facts are: (a) that God has shaped the earth like an egg (دحـــها 79:30) and that "He makes the night cover the day" (13:3), which is a further indication of the spherical nature of the earth; (b) that plants and fruits, besides other objects, are created in pairs (of sexes) (13:3) and (c) that the sky (space) is continually expanding (51:47). There are indeed many other passages of scientific import in the Qur'ân, specially relating to the origin and creation of man, nature and the universe.[1] It is not feasible here to refer even briefly to all of them. A few of them bearing on the question of the earth's shape may, however, be mentioned here.

The most significant in this respect is the statement at 91:6 which says that the earth has been thrown (in its orbit? in the space?) like a ball. The statement runs as follows: ﴿والأرض وما طحـــها﴾ "By the earth, and He Who threw it (like a ball)." It may be noted that like the word *daḥâhâ* (79:30) this word *ṭaḥâhâ* also has been rendered by many early scholars as "spread out" "expanded", etc. Significantly, however, both Al-Qurṭubî and Al-Shawkânî, while noticing the interpretations put on the word by the previous commentators, point out that the Arabs understood the word in the sense of going or moving away.[2] The meaning is further clarified by the author of the *Tâj al-'Arûs*, who, while noticing the meanings put on the word by the early commentators, points out that the word means "throwing" something, for instance a ball (وطحا بالكرة رمى بها).[3] This expression thus agrees well with the meaning of *daḥâhâ* as explained above and both indicate the spherical shape of the earth and its rotation in the space. It may further be noted that the statements immediately preceding 91:6, particularly 91:3-4, have a significant bearing on the point as they describe the relationship of day and night with the sun. The statements run as: ﴿والنهار إذا جلـــها * والليل إذا يغشـــها﴾ "By the day as it reveals it (the sun). By the night as it conceals it." These two statements make it quite clear that it is the action of the day and the night which brings to view the sun and conceals it, not that any movement of the sun causes day and night. The precision in the statements would be all

1. See for instance M. Bucaille, *op. cit.*

2. Al-Qurṭubî, *Tafsîr*, XX, 74-75; Al-Shawkânî, *Tafsîr*, V, 449.

3. *Tâj al-'Arûs*, X, 223. See also E.W. Lane, *Arabic-English lexicon*, under طحو and طحى where, besides the other meanings, it is noted: "طحا is said when one throws down a man upon his face" (Cambridge Islamic Texts Society print, 1984, Vol. II, p. 1832).

the more clear if attention is paid to 91:1 wherein the sun is referred to. It simply states: "By the sun and its brightness" ﴿والشمس وضحـىـها﴾. No action or verb is ascribed to it here. A little regard to such precise use of words would make it clear that they imply important scientific facts regarding the shape of the earth and its rotation.

The significance of the earth having been "thrown" (*ṭaḥâhâ*) becomes all the more clear if it is considered along with another very important Qur'ânic statement relating to the orign of the earth itself and of life on it. It says that initially the sky and the earth were joined together in one mass, that subsequently they were separated and that every living being on the earth originated in water. The passage runs as :

﴿أولم ير الذين كفروا أن السمـوٰت والأرض كانتا رتقا ففتقنـهما وجعلنا من الماء كل شىء حىّ أفلا يؤمنون﴾ (٢١ : ٣٠)

"Or, do the unblievers not see that the heavens and the earth were joined in one mass, and then We clove them asunder, and made out of water every living being? Will they not then believe?" (21:30).

The significance of this passage has become clear only with the progress of scientific knowledge in modern times about the origin of our planet and of life on it. Another Qur'ânic statement directly relating to the earth is 13:41 which says that it is gradually contracting, as is indeed established by modern research. The statement runs as follows:

﴿أولم يروا أنا نأتى الأرض ننقصها من أطرافها...﴾ (١٣ : ٤١)

"Have they not realized that We bring the earth to contraction in its extremities?" (13:41)

As regards the night gradually merging into the day and vice-versa we have a number of other Qur'ânic statements of which the following are very specific.

(a) ﴿تولج اليل فى النهار وتولج النهار فى اليل﴾ (٣ : ٢٧)

"Thou causest the night to enter into the day and Thou causest the day to enter into the night." (3:27)

(b) ﴿ذلك بأن الله يولج اليل فى النهار ويولج النهار فى اليل﴾ (٢٢ : ٦١)

"That is because Allah makes the night enter into the day and makes the day enter into the night." (22:61)

(c) ﴿ألم تر أن الله يولج اليل فى النهار ويولج النهار فى اليل﴾ (٣١ : ٢٩)

"Do you not see that Allah makes the night enter into the day and makes the day

enter into the night?" (31:29)

(d) and (e) ﴿ يولج اليل في النهار ويولج النهار في اليل ﴾ (d)

"He makes the night enter into the day and makes the day enter into the night." (35:13 & 57:6)

(f) ﴿وءاية لهم اليل نسلخ منه النهار﴾ (٣٦ : ٣٧)

"And a sign for them is the night. We gradually withdraw from it the day." (36:37)

These repeated statements of the Qur'ân about the gradual merging of the day and the night into each other, and not each appearing suddenly on the surface of the earth as would have been the case if it were flat, are clear pointers to the spherical shape of the earth. Still clearer, however, is :

﴿يكوّر اليل على النهار ويكوّر النهار على اليل... ﴾ (٣٩ : ٥)

"He makes the night roll round the day and He makes the day roll round the night." (39:5)

It is to be emphasized that the word *kawwara* (whence *yukawwiru*) means to roll into a ball or to make round. In other words, the *'âyah* says that the night and the day are a continuous process *round* the earth.

(B) CONCERNING THE SKY

The Qur'ân refers not only to the earth and to what it produces by Allah's leave, it also draws man's attention to the skies and the universe in order to bring home to him the theme of His Existence and Omnipotence. And in so doing it makes statements of which the full significance and meaning are unfolding themsleves only with the progress of our scientific knowledge. But as in the case of the earth, so in respect of the sky Watt states that the Qur'ân only picks up the prevailing erroneous notion and conceives the sky to be something built of solid materials, "presumably of stone."[1] He bases his assertion on four out of the eight Qur'ânic passages he cites in connection with what he imagines scientific errors in the Qur'ân. These passages, together with his translation of them, are as follows:

(a) 79:27-28 = ﴿ءأنتم أشد خلقا أم السماء بنـها * رفع سمكها فسوـها﴾

"Are you harder to create or the heaven he built? He raised up its roof and ordered it."

(b) 88:17-18 = ﴿أفلا ينظرون إلى الإبل كيف خلقت * وإلى السماء كيف رفعت﴾

"Will they not regard the camels, how they are formed? and the heaven how it is raised?"

1. Watt, *Muḥammad's Mecca*, 5.

(c) 51:47 = ﴿ والسماء بنينـــها بأييد وإنا لموسعون ﴾

"The heaven we have built with hands, and it is we who make it of vast extent..."

(d) 2:22 = ﴿ الذى جعل لكم الأرض فرشا والسماء بناء . . . ﴾

"(your lord) made for you the earth a carpet and the heaven an edifice..."

In the above quoted passages there occur the expressions *banâhâ* (بنـها), *banaynâhâ* (بنينـها) and *binâ'* (بناء) respectively in (a), (c) and (d). Understandably Watt has so translated them as would best illustrate the point he wants to make. But even accepting his rendering of the terms, it may be pointed out that the words "build" and "edifice" are not exclusively used in respect of solid objects. They may very well be applied to non-solids as well as to abstract ideas and objects. At any rate, his translation of the expression *wa'innâ la-mûsi'ûn* (وإنا لموسعون) as "and we make it of vast extent" is clearly misleading. The exact meaning of the expression, as pointed out earlier, is: "And We do expand it / or are in the process of expanding it."

Now, knowing as we do at the present time that just as an atom is a "structure" or "ecifice" "built" of certain elements, similarly the whole universe and its component parts, the innumerable systems (like the solar system) as a whole and each individually are very much a structure, a set-up, an integrated construction, an organism or, figuratively, even an "edifice." Hence the terms "built", "created", "formed" etc., may appropriately be applied to them, especially to the solar system, to which the earth and the neighbouring planets belong. The question is really how one sees it, as Watt himself seems to recognize. The trems by themselves do not mean that the Qur'ân conceives the sky to be something of a solid object.

Similarly the term *samk* (سمك) in (c), which Watt translates as "roof", has other meanings as well as height, expansiveness, extensivenss and *burj* or zone of constellation.[1] Of course the Qur'ân does in other places refer to the sky as "the raised roof" (52:5 = والسقف المرفوع) and a "protected roof" (21:32 = سقفا محفوظا). The word *saqf* in Arabic originally means a cover or a roof over anything. The term is therefore appropriately applicable to the immediate sphere around our atmospheric belt, or the latter itself, for both of them are very much "protected" and protecting covers over us, the earth.

Apart from these four passages, however, there, are many other statements in the Qur'ân which Watt does not take into account but which show

1. See *Lisân al-'Arab* under *samk* and *Tâj al-'Arûs*, VII, 145.

that its view of the sky is not so primitive as he thinks it to be. These other passages may be classified into three broad categories — (a) those that speak about the state of the sky at the beginning of the creation, (b) those that give an idea of the nature and contents of the sky or skies as they are now and (c) those that speak about their state in the end.

As regards the state of the sky at the beginning of the creation, two passages are of special significance. The one, 41:11, says that at the beginning the sky was only "smoke" (or vaporous or gaseous).[1] The other, 21:30, states that the skies and the earth were initially one mass but they were subsequently cloven asunder.[2] Modern scientists have different theories about the origin of the universe. Neither is the present writer competent to speak on the subject, nor is the present work a suitable place for a discussion on it. Speaking in general as a lay man, however, two statements may safely be made in this connection. First, the various modern theories about the origin of the universe seem only to approximate the position stated so clearly in the Qur'ân. Second, these Qur'ânic statements go inconceivably beyond the notion about the sky prevalent in the sixth-seventh century world.

The passages speaking about the nature and contents of the sky are more numerous. The most striking point in these passages is the plural from *al-samâwât* (السمٰوٰت) which occurs some 190 times in the Qur'ân, while in its singular form (السماء) it comes some 120 times. More interestingly, at least at nine places the Qur'ân specifically mentions that there are "seven skies",[3] one adjoining and corresponding to the other (*ṭibâqâ* طباقا), or "in layers".[4] It is now a generally accepted view with the scientists that the universe consists of several staggeringly expansive spaces, some enumerating exactly seven, each corresponding to and adjoining the other and each with its own constellations and meteors! The "skies" or the 'Seven skies" spoken of in the Qur'ân for about 200 times thus appear to assume a new significance and meaning in the light of this modern knowledge. For one thing, no person in the seventh century looking at the sky with bare eyes and imagining it to be something of a solid structure would venture to say so categorically and

1. The text is: ﴿ ... ثم استوى إلى السماء وهي دخان ... ﴾
2. The text is: ﴿ ... أن السمٰوٰت والأرض كانتا رتقا ففتقنٰهما ... ﴾
3. Q. 2:29; 17:44; 23:17; 23:86; 41:12; 65:12; 67:3; 71:15; 78:12.
4. Q. 67:3 and 71:15. The term *ṭibâqâ* (طباقا), though often translated as "one above the other", more correctly means "in layers" or "corresponding to one another". See Lane's *Lexicon*.

repeatedly that there are seven such structures, one above or beside the other. Nor was one in need of indulging in such unusual and, in the Prophet's case, a definitely hazardous statement. In this respect too the Qur'ân goes far beyond the seventh century notion about the sky.[1]

Equally significant are the statements about how the skies and the objects therein are held in their respective positions. It is very clearly mentioned that while "raising" the sky Allah also set the "balance".[2] It is also mentioned that the sky is not such a structure as is rested on visible pillars.[3] Most important of all, it is stated that the skies (السموات) and the earth are sustained by Allah's will. The statement runs as follows:

﴿إن الله يمسك السمٰوٰت والأرض أن تزولا ولئن زالتا إن أمسكهما من أحد من بعده...﴾ (٣٥ : ٤١)

"Verily Allah holds the heavens and the earth, lest they should cease to be there; and if they ceased to be there, there is none except He Who could hold them." (35:41)

The expression "holding" in respect of the "skies" as well as the earth is very significant. It means that neither is the earth rested on something "solid" nor are the skies so. In other words, the passage says that they are held in their respective positions without solid supports, that is in space, by Allah's will and design.

A third and bewildering fact mentioned about the sky, as mentioned earlier,[4] is that it is in the process of continuous expansion. Modern scientific knowledge is surprisingly in line with this statement of the Qur'ân. It may further be noted in this connection that the Qur'ân also describes the seven skies as "seven ways" or tracks. Thus 23:17 states:

﴿ولقد خلقنا فوقكم سبع طرائق وما كنا عن الخلق غـٰفلين﴾

"And We created above you seven ways, and We are not unmindful of creation."

The full significance of such statements in the Qur'ân may be understood only in the light of modern scientific knowledge about the movement of the heavenly bodies.

Another significant fact about the skies mentioned in the Qur'an is that there are living beings in them, and not simply on this our planet, the earth. Thus 42:29 very distinctly states:

1. Watt quickly passes over this fact by saying: "There is also mention of seven heavens." (*Muḥammad's Mecca*, 5.)

2. Q. 55:7 = ﴿والسماء رفعها ووضع الميزان﴾

3. Q. 13:2 and 31:10.

4. *Supra*, p. 313. See also Q. 51:47.

﴿ومن آيـٰـته خلق السمـٰـوٰت والأرض وما بث فيهما من دابة...﴾

"And of His signs is the creation of the skies and the earth and what He has spread forth in both of them of living beings."

There are other passages too that give the same impression.[1]

Finally, of these seven skies, the nearest in relation to us is described in the Qur'ân as *al-samâ' al-dunyâ* or the "nether sky". More significantly, it is very specifically stated that this the "nether sky" is decorated with stars (*kawâkib*) and incandescent lights (*maṣâbih*). Thus 41:12, after referring to Allah's having created the seven skies and set in each sky its order ﴿وأوحىٰ في كل سماء أمرها﴾ adds:

﴿وزيّنا السماء الدنيا بمصابيح...﴾

"and We decorated the nether sky with incandescent lights."

The same thing is stated in 67:5; while 37:6 states:

﴿إنا زينا السماء الدنيا بزينة الكواكب...﴾

"Verily We have decorated the nether sky with the decoration of stars..."

This feature is thus especial to the "nether" or the immediate sky. The reference here is obviously to the vast region of space in which the solar system and the neighbouring constellation exist. Modern scientific knowledge seems to be grappling with the nature and scope of this the "nether sky". According to the present state of that knowledge, this the "nether sky" is "roofed" by the "milky way" which contains at least one thousand billion stars!

With regard to the sky the notion of space is conveyed by the fact that the heavenly bodies—the sun, the moon, the stars—are described as having been set "in" (في) it and that they are made to move in certain well regulated ways and for specified terms.[2] Thus 13:2 states:

﴿وسخر الشمس والقمر كل يجرى لأجل مسمى...﴾

"And He has subjected to order the sun and the moon; each runs (its course) for a term appointed...."

Similarly 36:38-40 states:

﴿والشمس تجرى لمستقر لها ذٰلك تقدير العزيز العليم * والقمر قدرنـٰـه منازل حتىٰ عاد كالعرجون القديم * لا الشمس ينبغي لها أن تدرك القمر ولا اليل سابق النهار وكل في فلك يسبحون﴾

1. See for instance Q.16:49; 17:44; 17:55; 19:93; 21:19; 23:71; 24:41; 27:65; 28:18; 30:26.

2. See also Q. 14:33; 16:12; 29:61; 31:20; 31:29; 35:13; 39:5; 45:13; 7:4; 16:12.

"The sun runs its course to a destnation for it; that is the ordaining of the Almighty, the All-knowing. And the moon We have determined for it stations, till it reverts to the like of a withered palm-bough. It behoves not the sun to overtake the moon, neither does the night outstrip the day. And each swims in an orbit (space)."

Whatever interpretation one may like to put on the terms *mustaqarr* and *falak* in the above passage, the sense of motion and movement on the one hand, and that of space on the other, are all too clear from the expresions *yazrî*, *tajrî* and *yasbaḥûn*.

That the term *samâ'* (sky) embraces the open space above (or around) us is clearly indicated by such passages as 16:79 and 30:48. The first passage states:

﴿ألم يروا إلى الطير مسخرٰت في جو السماء...﴾

"Do they not look at the birds subjected to order in the midst of the sky?....

" The second passage, 30:48, states:

﴿الله الذى يرسل الريٰح فتثير سحابا فيبسطه في السماء كيف يشاء...﴾

"It is Allah Who sends the winds that raise the clouds. Thus He spreads them in the sky as He wills..."[1]

Coming to the group of passages that speak about the end, the most important thing to note is that the skies, along with the stars, planets and all the other creation, will be brought to an end. "That day We shall roll up the sky like the rolling up of the scroll of writings. As We began the first creation, We shall repeat it..."[2] That day the sky will "disintegrate with clouds";[3] it will come up with "visible smoke";[4] it "will be in a state of commotion";[5] it "will be rent asunder and turn red like paint";[6] it "will be like molten brass";[7] the stars will be displaced and scattered[8] and the sun and the moon will be joined together.[9] Finally, a new world and new skies will be ushered

1. The Qur'ân sometimes also figuratively employs the term *samâ'* for rain. Such passages are not, however, relevant to the present discussion.

2. Q. 21:104 = ﴿يوم نطوى السماء كطىّ السجل للكتب كما بدأنا أول خلق نعيده...﴾
3. Q. 25:25 = ﴿ويوم تشقق السماء بالغمٰم...﴾
4. Q. 44:10 = ﴿... يوم تأتي السماء بدخان مبين﴾
5. Q. 52:9 = ﴿يوم تمور السماء مورا﴾
6. Q. 55:37 = ﴿فإذا انشقت السماء فكانت وردة كالدهان﴾
7. Q. 70; 8 = ﴿يوم تكون السماء كالمهل﴾
8. Q. 82:1 = ﴿إذا السماء انفطرت * وإذا الكواكب انتثرت﴾
9. Q. 75:9 = ﴿وجمع الشمس والقمر﴾

See also Q. 39:67; 69:16; 73:18; 77:9; 78:19; 81:11 and 84:1

in, as the Qur'ân states:

﴿يوم تبدل الأرض غير الأرض والسمٰوٰت...﴾

"That day the earth will be exchanged for another earth, and the skies too." (14:48)

Thus will be the end of the present state of the world and the universe and the begining of a new life and a new world — the hereafter.

The process thus described belongs to the future, and Allah Alone knows when and how these will be effected. So far as modern science is concerned, it only speculates that the world may come to an end as a result of some serious disturbance and dislocation in the solar and planetary systems. It is thus not in disharmony with the Qur'ânic statements noted above.

The expressions "folding up", "rent asunder", etc. used in connection with the end of the skies may give an impression that these are objects susceptible of being "broken up". Like the terms "edifice" (بناء) and "roof" (سقف), these expressions also may be interpreted without assuming the skies to be "solid" objects, particularly as the process described includes also the stars, the planets and other heavenly bodies. Similarly, the existence of living beings in the skies does not mean that these latter should be solid objects like the earth; for, just as the earth is set in the sky (space), so there are other earths in the skies. The Qur'ân very clearly states in 65:12:

﴿الله الذى خلق سبع سمٰوٰت ومن الأرض مثلهن...﴾

"Allah is He who created the seven skies, and of the earth the like of them."

Also, it should be noted that the other living beings may have other types of physique and constitution; so their places of habitation may be different in nature than that of ours. Again, since even human beings become "weightless" at a certain distance in the space and may move about therein without the "support" of "solid" objects, it would be wrong to assume on the basis of the existence of living beings in the skies that these latter are therefore "solid" things.

It should be clear from the above discussion that there are certain expressions in the Qur'ân which, if approached with the primitive notion about the sky, would fit in with that notion, but they are very much appropriate to the modern concept of the sky and the universe. Above all, it should not be lost sight of that the present state of our knowledge is confined only to a part of what constitutes the "nether sky", *al-samâ' al-dunyâ*. The region lying beyond this nearest sky, with all its stars and planets, is simply beyond our knowledge. Even the scientists admit that what they have hitherto learnt about the extent and nature of the sky is only a microscopic particle in rela-

tion to what remains unknown of it. What lies beyond this known or supposedly known region is completely dark to us. In view of all these it would be simply presumptuous to assume that the Qur'ânic statements about the sky are not in accord with modern scientific knowledge. At any rate, Watt's assumption that the Qur'ânic view of the sky is primitive, reflecting the state of knowledge in the sventh century is wrong in three main respects. He picks up only a few statements in the Qur'ân, approaches them with the "primitive" notion and puts a very narrow construction on them. Secondly, he ignores a number of other statements in the Qur'ân that are surprisingly in accord with modern scientific information about the sky and the significance of which may be fully appreciated with the further progress of our knowledge. Thirdly, he seems to assume that modern scientists have the last word about the sky and that nothing remains to be known about it, which is not at all the case; for the scientists themselves admit that they have not fathomed even a particle of the vast and bewildering creation, the sky.

SECTION III

ON THE EVE OF THE CALL TO PROPHETHOOD

CHAPTER XIII

ON THE EVE OF THE CALL: THE *ḤANÎFS* AND THE AFFAIR OF 'UTHMÂN IBN AL-ḤUWAYRITH

It has been shown before[1] that Muḥammad (ﷺ) did not entertain any ambition nor did he make any preparation for becoming a Prophet and receiving divine communication (*waḥy*). Nor is the Qur'ân a collection of information derived from Judaeo-Christian and other sources.[2] In saying this it is not intended to suggest that the Prophet was isolated from his society and environment and did not concern himself with the affairs of his own people. The intention has been only to emphasize that notwithstanding his concern for his society and people, and despite his contemplation and deliberation, his call to prophethood and the revelations he received were only from God and were no product of his mind and contemplation. This fact becomes all the clearer when we take into account the developments that immediately preceded his call to prophethood.

Broadly, three developments attract our attention. These were: (i) a search made by a number of individuals who go by the name of *ḥanîfs* to find the true religion bequeathed by Prophet Ibrâhîm; (ii) an attempt made by one such individual to bring about a change of government and society at Makka with the help of the Christian Byzantine power; and (iii) the resort to solitary stay and contemplation (*al-taḥannuth*) by Muḥammad (ﷺ) at a cave on top of the mount Ḥirâ', some three miles away from the busy life of the Makkan city centre.

The first two of these three developments are treated in the present chapter. The third, being immediately connected with the receipt of revelation by the Prophet, is dealt with in that connection in the following chapter.

I. THE *ḤANÎFS*

The historians mention a number of persons who, shortly before Muḥammad's (ﷺ) call to prophethood, gave up idolatry and polytheism and sought the true Abrahamic religion called *al-ḥanifiyyah*. The most frequently mentioned names are:

(1) Waraqah ibn Nawfal (ibn Asad ibn 'Abd al-'Uzzâ).

1. *Supra*, Ch. VIII.
2. *Supra*, Chaps. IX and X.

(2) 'Uthmân ibn al-Ḥuwayrith (ibn Asad ibn 'Abd al-'Uzzâ)

(3) 'Ubayd Allah ibn Jaḥsh

(4) Zayd ibn 'Amr ibn Nufayl

(5) 'Umayyah ibn 'Abî al-Ṣalt

(6) 'Amr ibn 'Abasah

(7) Ṣirmah ibn 'Abî 'Anas (or ibn 'Abî Qays)

(8) Al-Nâbighah al-Ja'dî

(9) Ri'âb ibn al-Barâ'

(10) 'Abû 'Âmir al-'Awsî

(11) Khâlid ibn Sinân ibn Ghayth

(12) 'Abû Qays ibn al-Aṣlat

The first four persons in the list may be said to form a class by themselves for two reasons. In the first place, they were all inhabitants of Makka and were not only contemporaries of Muḥammad (ﷺ) but also from among his close relatives and acquaintances. Secondly, they appear to have renounced idolatry and embarked upon a search for the true religion of Ibrâhîm almost simultaneously. It is related by Ibn Isḥâq that these four persons were once present at an annual religious gathering of the Quraysh who had assembled there for rendering homage to an idol and offering sacrifices to it. On that occasion these four men silently withdrew from the assemblage and whispered among themselves that all those people of theirs had far strayed from the religion of their forefathers, the religion of Ibrâhîm, and that it was meaningless to worship a stone (idol) which could neither hear nor see, nor do good or harm to anyone. They then dispersed and subsequently each separately travelled in different lands in search of *al-ḥanifiyyah*, the religion of Ibrâhîm.[1]

It is obvious that though these persons thus dissociated themselves from their peoples' religious ceremony all at a time, their dislike of polytheism and idol-worship must have been developing within themselves for sometime past. It is also noteworthy that what they did was a spontaneous and unobtrusive act and not at all a concerted public movement on their part. This is all the clearer from the further fact noted by Ibn Isḥâq that they agreed

1. Ibn Hishâm, I, 222-223.

among themselves not to divulge their feelings to others.[1] But whatever the nature of their action, it is significant that they were convinced that their people had been far removed from the original religion of Ibrâhîm, *al-ḥanîfiyyah*, which they and their people were supposed to follow.

The first named person, Waraqah ibn Nawfal,[2] belonged to Banû Asad of Quraysh and was a paternal uncle of *'Umm al-Mu'minîn* Khadîjah (r.a.), both her father Khuwaylid and Nawfal being two of the sons of Asad ibn 'Abd al-'Uzzâ. Waraqah was evidently the oldest of the group of four. The details of his search for the true religion are not known; but it is on record that he ultimately settled with Christianity, acquired a good knowledge of the Bible and also knew Hebrew in which he is stated to have copied parts of the Christian scripture. He was very advanced in age when the Prophet received the first revelation. It is well known how after that momentous event Khadîjah (r.a.) took the Prophet to this cousin of hers and how he, Waraqah, assured them that Muḥammad (ﷺ) had received God's commission similar to that of Moses and that it would involve him in troubles with his own people, adding that if he (Waraqah) lived till that time he would extend all possible help to him. It is clear from this report that though Waraqah had embraced Christianity, he still entertained two specific notions, namely, that God's revelation comes to a Prophet through the angel Jibrîl (Nâmûs) and that another of His Prophets was shortly to appear. Indeed Waraqah was convinced that Muḥammad (ﷺ) was that expected Prophet. In view of Waraqah's antecedent, advanced age and acquaintance with the Judaeo-Christian scriptures it is reasonable to assume that his above mentioned notions were the result of his study of those scriptures as they existed at that time.

The second person in the list, 'Uthmân ibn al-Ḥuwayrith also belonged to Banû Asad and was a cousin of both Waraqa and Khadîjah (r.a.); for 'Uthmân's father, Al-Ḥuwayrith, was another son of Asad ibn 'Abd al-'Uzzâ.'Uthmân's quest for the true religion ended with his effort to change the religion and government at Makka with foreign assistance, which will be related in the next section.

'Ubayd Allah ibn Jaḥsh, the third in the list, belonged to Banû Asad ibn Khuzaymah. He was a cousin of the Prophet in that 'Ubayd Allah's mother,'Umaymah, was 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib's daughter and therefore a paternal

1. *Ibid.*, 222.
2. See for Waraqah, *ibid.*, 223; Ibn Qutaybah, *Al-Ma'ârif*, 59, Al-Mas'ûdî, *Murûj.*, I, 73.

aunt of the Prophet. Like the others 'Ubayd Allah travelled in the neighbouring lands in search of *al-ḥanîfiyyah* and, after the Prophet had received his call, became one of the early converts to Islam. His wife, 'Umm Ḥabîbah, daughter of 'Abû Sufyân ibn Ḥarb (of Banû 'Abd Shams) also embraced Islam. Both 'Ubayd Allah and his wife were among the first group of Muslims who migrated to Abyssinia. There 'Ubayd Allah ultimately went over to Christianity and died in that state. His wife,'Umm Ḥabîbah, however, remained steadfast in Islam and was subsequently married to the Prophet.[1]

The most interesting is the story of Zayd ibn 'Amr ibn Nufayl.[2] He belonged to Banû 'Adyy (ibn Ka'b ibn Lu'ayy). He was a cousin of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭâb's, both Al-Khaṭṭâb and 'Amr being sons of Nufayl. Zayd's son, Sa'îd, married 'Umar's sister, Fâṭimah, and both husband and wife became early converts to Islam. Zayd had a strong abhorrence of idolatry and did not partake of the meat of any animal sacrificed for an idol. Likewise he refrained from taking the meat of an animal which died of itself and from alcoholic drinks. He did not ultimately keep his views a secret and openly opposed the bad *jâhiliyyah* custom of killing female babes and often saved their lives by himself undertaking to maintain them. Sometimes he used to sit by the Ka'ba and there declare that none except he of his people was truly on the religion of Ibrâhîm and then prostrate himself only for the sake of Allah. His renunciation of idol-worship and his denunciation of the *jâhiliyyah* customs were pronounced enough to evoke the hostility of even his own cousin, Al-Khaṭṭâb. The latter is said to have instigated Zayd's wife and others against him. Because of the enmity and opposition of these people it became difficult for Zayd to stay in Makka. In any case he undertook journeys to the neighbouring lands, particularly Syria, in search of *al-ḥanîfiyyah*,"the religion of Ibrâhîm." There he met Christian monks and Jewish rabbis but neither Christianity nor Judaism appealed to him. It is stated that he even considered both these religions equally corrupted by polytheistic practices. It is further related that in reply to his queries about the religion of Ibrâhîm one of the monks told him that a Prophet was to appear with *ḥanifiyyah*,"the religion of Ibrâhîm" in Zayd's own land and that the time for his appearance had just approached. On hearing this Zayd hastened to get back to Makka but was killed by some persons while still within the bounds of Syria. A report

1. Ibn Hishâm, I, 223-224.

2. See for him *ibid.*, 224-232; *Al-'Iṣâbah*, I, 569-570 (no. 2923); *Al-Istî'âb*, II, 614 (no. 982); *Kitâb al-Aghânî*, II, 133.

says that he had once met the Porphet before his call in the vicinity of Makka.[1] This incdent must have taken place before Zayd made his fateful journey to Syria. It is further reported that once his son Sa'îd asked the Prophet whether they could pray for Zayd's soul. The Prophet expressed his view that they could.

Besides these four, most of the others in the list were also contemporaries of the Prophet. 'Umayyah ibn 'Abî al-Ṣalt, the fifth in the list, belonged to Banû Thaqîf.[2] Like his father 'Abû al-Ṣalt ibn 'Abî al-Rabî'ah,'Umayyah was a poet. He is equally known, however, as a *ḥanîf* and as a seeker after the true religion. There is no doubt that he had no faith in idolatry. He considered wine unlawful and abstained from taking it. He had studied the scriptures of the Christians and the Jews but did not embrace either of these religions. His verses are chiefly on religious topics, savouring remarkably of monotheism. It is related by 'Abû Bakr al-Ṣiddîq (r.a.) that one day he and Zayd ibn 'Amr were seated by the Ka'ba when 'Umayyah ibn'Abî al-Ṣalt passed by them. At that time Zayd asked him whether he had found the true religion he had been seeking.'Umayyah replied that he had not yet, and then recited a composition of his saying that every religion except *al-ḥanîfiyyah* was vain before Allah.[3] Like the others he also believed that a Prophet was shortly to appear with the true religion. Indeed he himself hoped to be that Prophet. Hence when Muḥammad (ﷺ) received his call 'Umayyah, out of envy, did not recognize his prophethood and bitterly opposed him.[4]

The sixth, seventh and eighth in the list, namely, 'Amr ibn 'Abasah, Ṣirmah ibn 'Anas and Al-Nâbighah al-Ja'dî, may be grouped together because all of them ultimately embraced Islam at the hands of the Prophet. 'Amr ibn 'Abasah belonged to Banû Sulaym. According to his own statements he had renounced the idols during the period of *jâhiliyyah*, considered them utterly worthless and used to point out the people's folly in worshipping those idols. He further tells us that one day when he was thus speaking about

1. *Supra*, pp. 199-201.

2. See for him generally Ibn Qutaybah, *Al-Shi'r wa al-Shu'arâ'*, Vol. I., 459 and *Kitâb al-'Aghânî*, Vol. III, 17 ff.

3. *'Usd al-Ghâbah*, Vol. III, 207 (no. 3064). See also Ibn Hishâm, I, 60, where the verse is quoted with slight difference in wording in connection with Abrahah's attack on the Ka'ba. Some of his verses are quoted also in Al-Mas'ûdî's *Murûj*, I., 70-71. One of the verses there runs as follows: (الحمد لله لا شريك له من لم يقلها فنفسه ظلما)

4. *Kitâb al-'Aghânî*, Vol. III, 187.

the idols, one of his listeners pointed out to him that there had appeared at Makka a person (i.e. the Prophet) who spoke similarly about the idols. Thereupon 'Amr came to Makka, met the Prophet and after listening to his exposition of Islam embraced it at his hands.[1]

Similarly Ṣirmah ibn 'Anas of Banû 'Adyy ibn al-Najjâr abandoned the worship of idols in the period of *jâhiliyyah*, adopted a monastic life and built a place of worship for himself where anyone not in a state of purity was not allowed to enter. He used to take bath after sexual intercourse, abstained from approaching a woman in a state of menstruation and avoided alcoholic and intoxicating drinks. He used to declare that he worshipped only the God of Ibrâhîm and followed his religion. When the Prophet migrated to Madina Ṣirmah was a very old man. He attended the Prophet, however, and embraced Islam at his hands.[2]

Al-Nâbighah al-Ja'dî of Banû 'Âmir ibn Ṣa'ṣa'ah also used to talk about monotheism and the religion of Ibrâhîm during the period of *jâhiliyyah*. In addition, he believed in life after death, punishment, paradise and hell. Subsequently he embraced Islam.[3] Similarly Ri'âb ibn al-Barâ', 'Abû 'Âmir al-'Awsî and Khâlid ibn Sinân ibn Ghayth had also renounced idolatry, believed in One God and expected that a Prophet would soon appear with the true religion of Ibrâhîm.[4]

The last, in the list, 'Abû Qays ibn al-Aṣlat is to be distinguished from the three above mentioned persons in that though none at Madina was better known as a *ḥanîf* and though he met the Prophet when he migrated there, he could not ultimately embrace Islam. He was a poet and a leading figure among the 'Aws tribe. It is said that he even led his clan in war. He used to speak about *al-ḥanîfiyyah* in his poems and even of the forecasts of the Jewish and Christian scriptures about the coming of a Prophet. The Jews of Madina urged him to embrace Judaism but he declined. Like many others of his group he travelled to Syria in search of the true religion. There the monks and rabbis likewise invited him to accept their religions but he refused to do

1. *Musnad*, IV, 111, 114; *Muslim, Kitâb al ṣalât al-musâfirîn, Bâb* 53, *ḥadîth* no. 394 (p. 832); Nawawî, IV, 114-115; *'Usd al-Ghâbah*, III, 210; *Al-Istî'âb*, III, 1192-1194, no. 1936.

2. *Al-'Iṣâbah*, II, 182-183, (no. 4061).

3. *Al-Istî'âb*, IV, 1514 (no. 2648).

4. Ibn Qutaybah, *Al-Ma'ârif* (ed. Tharwat 'Ukâshah), Cairo, n.d., 58-68; Al-Mas'ûdî, *Murûj*, I., (ed. M.M. 'Abd al-Ḥamîd), Beirut, n.d., 67-69.

so. Thereupon one of the monks told him that *al-ḥanîfiyyah* which he had been seeking was the religion of Ibrâhîm and that it was to be found in his own land. Therefore he returned to Madina and went to Makka to perform *'umrah*. There he met Zayd ibn 'Amr ibn Nufayl and had a conversation with him. He told him that he (Zayd) also had found the religions of the monks and the rabbis untrue and that the only true monotheism was *al-ḥanîfiyyah,* the religion of Ibrâhîm. When the Prophet migrated to Madina 'Abû Qays met him, listened to his exposition of Islam and was convinced of its truth and of him as Prophet. On his way back home, however, 'Abû Qays came across 'Abd Allah ibn 'Ubayy who instigated him against the Khazraj. Thereupon he decided to defer his acceptance of Islam for a year. Before the expiry of that time, however, he died about ten months after the Prophet's migration to Madina.[1]

Besides these persons Quss ibn Sâ'ida, 'Addâs (*mawlâ* of 'Utbah ibn Rabî'ah) and even Baḥîra, the Bosra monk, are reckoned by some as among the *ḥanîfs*.[2] One might even add to their rank 'Abû Dharr al-Ghifârî and Salmân al-Fârisî. The former had abandoned idol worship and started performing *ṣalât* for Allah for three years prior to his conversion to Islam;[3] while the latter (Salmân) had undertaken a long search for *al-ḥanîfiyyah* the true religion of Ibrâhîm, before he ultimately found the truth in Islam.[4]

It is clear from the above that all those persons were actuated by a revulsion against polytheism and gross idolatry of the time and, conversely, by an urge towards monotheism. This monotheism they equated with *al-ḥanîfiyyah,* the religion of Ibrâhîm. The sources unequivocally speak of this fact and also reproduce the statements of a number of those persons making specific mention of *al-ḥanîfiyyah* and identifying it with the religion of Ibrâhîm. Even the poems of 'Umayyah ibn 'Abî al-Ṣalt use this specific term. Also, many of them were specifically known as *ḥanîfs* among their peoples.

This urge to get back to the religion of Ibrâhîm is significant. For it is an established fact that in spite of their degeneration into idolatry the Arabs traced their origin, the sacredness of the Ka'ba and a number of their reli-

1. Ibn Sa'd, IV, 383-385.
2. Ibn Qutaybah, *op.cit.*, 61; Al-Mas'ûdî, *Murûj*, I., 69, 74, 75.
3. *Musnad*, V, 174; *'Al-Istî'âb*, I., 252-256.
4. Ibn Hishâm, I., 214-222; Al-Dhahabî, *Siyar*, I, 505-557.

gious rites and customs to Ibrâhîm. Also the concept of Allah as Supreme God had not been totally forgotten. It was thus natural that those pious souls who yearned after monotheism sought a revival of the original faith of their progenitor. The search for *al-ḥanîfiyyah* was thus yet another evidence as well as a consequence of the continuity of the Abrahamic tradition in Arabia. It also illustrates the fact that Judaism and Christianity as they then prevailed in Arabia and Syria did not have an unquestioned monotheistic appeal to those enquirers; for most of them did not embrace either, although they had met the savants of both the faiths. In fact many of the *ḥanîfs* considered the Judaism and Christianity of the time as equally corrupt religions. And although a couple of enquirers like Waraqah ibn Nawfal and 'Uthmân ibn al-Ḥuwayrith embraced Christianity, the former evidently did not consider it the final truth; for, by all accounts, he still entertained the notion of the coming of another Prophet and another revelation from Allah. And the latter, 'Uthmân ibn al-Ḥuwayrith, was obviously actuated by his self-interest and ambition.

There is no doubt, however, that on the eve of Muḥammad's (ﷺ) call to prophethood a spirit of enquiry and an urge for finding the truth had gained momentum with a number of thoughtful men of the land, including the Prophet's own town and from among his own relatives and acquaintances. Being himself a thoughtful man he obviously could not have remained totally impervious to this spirit of the time. Before discussing how he responded to it, however, it would be worthwhile to notice the affair of 'Uthmân ibn al-Ḥuwayrith.

II. THE AFFAIR OF 'UTHMÂN IBN AL-ḤUWAYRITH

'Uthmân ibn al-Ḥuwayrith, a cousin of both Khadîjah (r.a.) and Waraqah ibn Nawfal, was one of the most intelligent and resourceful men of Quraysh.[1] Like the others he also travelled in search of the true religion and went to Syria where he embraced Christianity. His conversion to that faith was not, however, disinterested. He formed a scheme of becoming the ruler of Makka and turning its people Christians with the support of the Byzantine authority.[2] According to Ibn Isḥâq he visited the Byzantine ruler and proposed to hold Makka for him and to arrange for tributes to be sent to him,

1. Al-Fâsî, *'Al-'Iqd al-Thamîn etc.*, I., 153.

2. Muḥammad ibn Ḥabib al-Baghdâdî, *Kitâb al-Munammiq Fî Akhbâr Quraysh*, (ed Khurshid Aḥmad Fâriq), Beirut, 1985, p. 154.

suggesting that if the Makkans did not yield to the scheme they could be brought to their heels by the Byzantine ruler's stopping their trade with Syria.[1] The Byzantine ruler naturally saw in the plan an opportunity to turn the heart of Arabia together with the commercially prosperous and religiously central city of Makka into a satellite state like the Ghassanid kingdom. The scheme must have appealed to him as an easy way to achieve the object which Abrahah's military campaign some thirty years previously had failed to do. Accordingly the Byzantine authorities appointed 'Uthmân governor of Makka[2] and wrote to its people asking them to submit to him.[3]

'Uthmân returned with this commission to Makka and asked the Quraysh to accept him as their ruler, telling them that if they did not do so their trade with Syria would be embargoed by the Byzantine ruler.[4] His claim was opposed by the Makkans in general, the leading part in the opposition being taken by a man of his own clan, Aswad ibn Asad ibn 'Abd al-'Uzzâ,[5] who organized the Quraysh clans as a whole against the move. Thus having failed to gain any support for himself, 'Uthmân was obliged to escape to Syria. He still did not totally abandon his scheme and induced the Byzantine authorities to stop the Makkans' trade with Syria. Hence, when two of the leading merchants of Makka, Sa'îd ibn al-'Âṣî ibn 'Umayyah and 'Abû Dhi'b (i.e. Hishâm ibn Shu'bah ibn 'Abd Allah) went to Syria, they were arrested and put into prison.'Abu Dhi'b died in the prison. Faced with this situation the Quraysh leader Al-Walîd ibn al-Mughîrah went to Syria and obtained Sa'îd's release after prolonged negotiations. Al-Walîd's diplomacy and the Byzantine need for preserving trade relations with Arabia ultimately turned the table upon 'Uthmân who was shortly afterwards poisoned to death. According to one report he was poisoned by 'Amr ibn Jafnah al-Ghassânî, the very officer who had earlier been entrusted by the Byzantine authorities to enforce the trade embargo and imprison the Makkan merchants.[6]

Thus ended the affair of 'Uthmân ibn al-Ḥuwayrith. It took place definitely after the *Fijâr* wars, most probably close on to the time of the rebuild-

1. Suhaylî, *Al-Rawḍ al-'Unuf*, I., 255.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.* Also Al-Fâsî, *op.cit.*
4. *Ibid.*
5. He thus appears to be an uncle of 'Uthmân's. Al-Fâsî, however, describes the person as 'Uthmân's cousin, calling him 'Abû Jam'ah.
6. Suhaylî, *op.cit.*

ing of the Ka'ba which, as noted earlier, took place when the Prophet was about thirty-five years of age. The absence of a central and decisive authority at Makka which that incident illustrates seems to have encouraged 'Uthmân to embark upon his bold design. His failure shows, however, that whatever might have been the state of government at Makka at the time and whatever the nature and extent of inter-clan rivalry, the Quraysh clans were at one with regard to the basic issue of their independence and freedom from foreign interference.

With reference to this incident, however, a number of assumptions have been made. Thus Watt, who seeks to explain the rise of Islam in the context of Makkan politics and "high finance", links this episode with what he conceives to be the Makkan policy of neutrality between the two "giants", the Byzantine and the Persian empires. He says that among other reasons, the Makkans rejected 'Uthmân ibn al-Ḥuwayrith because they thought it "unwise to depart from the policy of neutrality".[1] The untenability of Watt's theory of neutrality as a whole has been pointed out earlier. It may only be added here that the other "giant", Persia, did not make any move to bring Makka under control so that the question of a policy of neutrality between these two powers in the present instance does not arise at all. The simple reason for the Makkan opposition to 'Uthmân's design, as stated by his kinsman Aswad, was that Makka did not, nor would sbmit to the rule of such a "king".[2] No theory of neutrality between two big powers is needed to explain the Makkan rejection of 'Uthmân's pretensions, especially when he had forsaken the established religion and had come forward as a stooge of a foreign power and with the design of not only becoming a ruler but also substituting that established religion for Christianity. Makka would have reacted similarly even if he had not changed his faith and acted as a foreign agent.

Watt also attempts to link the incident with his theory about the *Ḥilf al-Fuḍûl*. Thus he says that had Banû 'Umayyah and Banû Makhzûm, who were outside the *Ḥilf*, come forward in taking the lead in opposing 'Uthmân," it would have given fresh life to the confederacy of the Fuḍûl", but such an eventuality was averted "by getting a member of Asad to take the lead."[3] This is a pure conjecture without any support in the sources. Under-

1. Watt, *M. at M.*, 16.
2. Suhayli, *op.cit.*
3. Watt, *M. at M.*, 16.

lying the hypothesis is the equally faulty assumption that the *Ḥilf al-Fuḍûl* had been weak and ineffective since its inception. The baselessness of that assumption too has been shown earlier.[1] 'Uthmân's own clan, Asad, of course belonged to the *Ḥilf*; but there is no indication in the sources that he acted, even remotely, in the interest of the group. Nor did the other clans of the *Ḥilf* look upon his move in any way calculated to improve their position. Nor is there any hint in the sources that the clans like 'Umayyah and Makhzûm considered the affair in the light of their rivalry with the *Ḥilf* and made any manoeuvre to get someone of Asad to take the lead in opposing 'Uthmân. If the affair had in any way been one between the *Ḥilf* and their rival group, there is no reason to believe that a leading individual of the former like Al-Aswad ibn Asad would have failed to see his group interest in the matter and would instead have played a pawn in the hands of the opponents of his group. Nor would the other leaders of the group have allowed him to play that role. Watt disregards all these aspects of the matter and builds one conjecture upon another, all based on the implied assumption that the leaders of the *Ḥilf* were all fools enough not to see the game of their rivals. In any case, Watt's basic assumption, that the members of Banû Makhzûm and Banû 'Umayyah purposely remained in the background regarding the affair is also wrong. For it was Al-Walîd ibn al-Mughîrah, leader of Banû Makhzûm, who in fact played the leading role in the final scene of the act and brought about 'Uthmân's destruction.

The third assumption in this connection was originally made by Margoliouth and subsequently taken over by Watt. It suggests that because of 'Uthmân ibn al-Ḥuwayrith's incident Muḥammad (ﷺ) became aware of the political implications of embracing either Christianity or Judaism and therefore came forward with a monotheism free from such political implications. Clearly, this suggestion has for its basis the other assumption that Muḥammad (ﷺ) made conscious and calculated moves to become a Prophet. The incorrectness of that assumption has been shown earlier.[2] Apart from that, the suggestion suffers from another fallacy. It assumes that the Christianity and Judaism of the time offered clear and unmistakable monotheism. That they did not do so is amply illustrated by the attitude of the enquirers after the truth. The fact that most of them did not find these reli-

1. *Supra*, pp. 227-228.
2. *Supra*, chapter X.

gions quite satisfactory to their quest and refrained from embracing either of them is enough to show that there was no special need for Muḥammad (ﷺ) to have recourse to political considerations for finding an "alternative" monotheism. Islam was not simply an alternative monotheism to the Arabs shorn of the political implications of Judaism and Christianity, as Watt states.[1]

1. Watt, *Muḥammad's Mecca*, 38.

CHAPTER XIV

THE ORIENTALISTS AND THE *ḤANIFS*: I. THE JEFFERY-BELL THEORY

I. SUMMARY OF THE THEORY

One constant endeavour of the orientalists has been to relate the rise of Islam to the contemporary situation and to show that Muḥammad (ﷺ) received information and ideas from various sources. The subject of the *ḥanîfs* has therefore naturally attracted a good deal of the orientalists' attention. Writing in the middle of the nineteenth century Aloy Sprenger suggested that there was in pre-Islamic Arabia a wide-spread religious movement initiated by a "sect" of *ḥanîfs* and that Muḥammad (ﷺ) simply placed himself at the head of the movement, organized and directed it and utilized it for his own ends.[1] Such extreme views were, however, quickly called in question, mainly by Ignaz Goldziher, who pointed out Sprenger's errors and stated that the *ḥanîfs* did not form any organized group but were a few isolated individuals.[2]

By the end of the nineteenth century and during the early years of the twentieth a number of scholars addressed themselves to the subject, concentrating on the etymology of *ḥanîf*.[3] The view that prevailed for some time was that the word *ḥanîf* might be connected with the Hebrew *ḥânéf* meaning "profane". There was no noticeable departure from the general thesis, however, that whatever might have been the origin of the word, Muḥammad (ﷺ) was influenced by the *ḥanîfs*. Writing in 1907 the prevailing view was reflected by R.A. Nicholson when he said: "No doubt Muḥammad, with whom most of them [the *ḥanîfs*] were contemporary, came under their influence, and may have received his first stimulus from this quarter."[4]

The etymological aspect of the question received further attention in

1. A Sprenger, *Das Leben und die Lehre des Mohammed*, I., Berlin, 1861, pp. 45-134.

2. I. Goldziher, *Muhammadanische Studien*, I, Halle, 1888, pp. 1-39.

3. See J. Wellhausen, *Reste Arabiscen Heidentums*, second edn., Berlin, 1897, p. 238; D.S. Margoliouth, *J.R.A.S.*, 1903, pp. 467-493; Sir Charles Layall, *ibid.*, pp. 771-784 and L. Caetani, *Annalli dell' Islam*, I, Milan, 1905, pp. 181-192.

4. R.A. *Nicholson, A Literary History of the Arabs* (1st edn. 1907), 1988 reprint, p. 150. See also P.K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs* (1st. edn. 1937), 10th edn., reprinted 1986, pp. 107-108.

Arthur Jeffery's thesis on *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'ân.*[1] He suggested that the word *ḥanîf* was derived from the Syriac *ḥanpâ* meaning "heathen". He further stated that the term *ḥanîf* is applied in the Qur'ân mainly to Ibrâhîm who came to play an important part at a certain stage in Muḥammad's (ﷺ) career, namely, when he was claiming that his teachings went back to a revelation earlier than either Judaism or Christianity, *millat Ibrâhîm*, which he was restoring and republishing.[2]

On perusing this thesis before its publication Richard Bell came forward with a theory in the pages of *The Moslem World*,[3] building mainly upon Jeffery's hint about what he calls Ibrâhîm's part at a certain stage in Muḥammad's (ﷺ) life. "There in a nutshell, it seems to me", remarked Bell, "we have the whole secret."[4] The "secret" which he unfolded was as follows. He first somewhat modified Jeffery's view about the origin of the word saying that "the long vowel of the second syllable of *ḥanîf* is fatal to its derivation from Syriac *ḥanpâ* in its singular form", but that the Arabic plural form, *ḥunafâ'*, is a close reproduction of the Syriac plural *ḥanephê*. Therefore, Bell said, the word was borrowed in its plural form and from it the singular form *ḥanîf* was made according to the rules of Arabic grammar, but in a reverse order. He further said that the Syriac-speaking Christians used the word *ḥanephê* to mean the unconverted Arabs. Hence *ḥunafâ'* "were the Arabs who were neither Jews nor Christians, but who continued to follow the ancient native religion."[5]

Thus explaining the origin and meaning of the term Bell stated that Muḥammad (ﷺ) used it to convey "the very antithesis of polytheist" and, indeed, to make Makka, "the town which had rejected him" and against which he "was planning revenge", the centre of his religion because of his differences with the Jews. Bell argued that though the Prophet had earlier borrowed "a certain amount of positive teaching" from Judaism and Christianity, when he came to Madina differences developed between him and the

1. Published at Baroda for the first time in 1938.

2. A Jeffery, *op.cit.*, 112-115.

3. R. Bell, "Who were the Hanifs", *The Moslem World*, 1930, pp. 120-124. Bell acknowledges his debt to Jeffery thus: "The suggestion came to me from reading a discussion of the word *ḥanîf* in a thesis by Dr. Arthur Jeffery, of Cairo, on The Foreign Vocabulary of the Koran — a valuable work which it is hoped may soon find a publisher".— *Ibid.*, p. 120.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 121.

5. *Ibid.*

Jews for certain reasons.[1] Therefore he started breaking away from both these religions, beginning with the change of *qibla* from Jerusalem to Makka and then giving out that God's revelation had originally been the same, "but in course of time the Jews and Christians had both departed from the purity of the faith and had gone their own ways."[2] Having said this Bell added that Muḥammad (ﷺ) had to do with another religion —"the religion of the Arabs, or in the language of those from whom he had hitherto taken his information on religious matters, the *ḥunafâ'*." That must also be a degeneration of the pristine pure religion. And as Abraham (Ibrâhîm) through Ishmael (Ismâ'îl) was the progenitor of the Arabs, Muḥammad (ﷺ) took him to be the founder of the religion of the *ḥunafâ'*, but was careful to add that "he was not one of the polytheists" and that the "*ḥanîf* religion" which he founded was, like all other revealed religions, a pure monotheism. Thus arguing, Bell says that "as Abraham was earlier in time than both Judaism and Christianity, his religion was purer than either of them had ever been... This was the religion, then, which Muḥammad now conceived himself as commissioned to restore. His face is henceforth set, not towards Judaism or Christianity, but towards the assumed pure original of the Arab religion." The *ḥanîfs* were thus, concludes Bell, "the followers of the ideal original of Arab religion. They were no sect or party of historical people, but the product of Muḥammad's unresting mind."[3]

Thus, starting from the climax that the *ḥanîfs* were an organized "sect" who initiated a "movement" towards monotheism, an anticlimax was reached after about a century of conjectures and assumptions and it was stated that the *ḥanîfs* were "no sect or party of historical people" but merely the imaginary "followers of the ideal original of Arab religion", "the product of Muḥammad's unresting mind". Apart from this assumption, Bell's main suggestions are: (a) that the word *ḥanîf* was taken over from the Syriac plural form of *ḥanephê*, (b) that the Syriac-speaking Christians meant by that term the Arabs who followed "the ancient native religion"; (c) that Muḥammad (ﷺ), when he broke away from the Jews at Madina, adopted this term, put the sense of "antithesis of polytheist" on it and identified his teachings with this assumed original of Arab reilgion, which he also identified with the religion of Abraham, "the progenitor" of the Arabs through Ismâ'îl, stressing

1. *Ibid.*, 122-123.
2. *Ibid.*, 123-124.
3. *Ibid.*, 124.

further that God's revelation had originally been the same to all the previous prophets. It is mainly on this Jeffery-Bell formulation that Watt has based his remarks about the *ḥanîfs*. Before passing on to that it would be worthwhile to examine the Jeffery-Bell position a little more closely.

II. UNTENABILITY OF THE JEFFERY-BELL THEORY

To begin with, it may be noted that the statements about the origin of the word *ḥanîf* are based solely on sonic similarities and are thus obviously conjectural and only tentative. In fact, not very long after Bell had given his support to Jeffery's suggestion, two scholars put forth a joint-article discussing the pre-Islamic use of the word and suggesting Aramic-Nabataean origin for it.[1] Since then scholarly opinions have alternated between the Syriac and Nabataean hypotheses.[2]

The origin of the word, however, seems to have very little direct bearing on the point at issue; for it is well-known that the meaning of a word often changes with the change of time and place. A very instructive instance in our own time time is the word "democratic" which is often used in the "Communist Bloc" to denote a socialist totalitarian system, but in the "Western Bloc" it is the very antithesis of totalitarianism. Hence, even if it is shown that the Syriac-speaking Christians used the word *ḥanpâ* to mean "heathen" or the Arabs who followed their ancient native religion, it does not necessarily follow that the Arabic word *ḥanîf*, which is only *supposed* to be a descendant of *ḥanpâ*, was also used by the Arabs in the same sense.

Secondly, the theory of derivation from a foreign language raises the question: when did this borrowing take place? The suggestion seems to be generally that it took place long before Muḥammad's (ﷺ) appearance on the scene. In that case the word had been in use in Arabia and it had reference to a particular class of people. This being the case, is it reasonable to assume that Muḥammad (ﷺ) would use the expression in a totally different, rather opposite sense of a monotheist just for the sake of breaking with the Jews and Christians.? Further, would not such a novel use of the term evoke the opposition and criticism of his own people, not to speak of the very Jews and Christians against whom he was supposedly taking the step? But Bell seems

1. N.A. Faris and H.W. Glidden, "The development of the meaning of the Koranic Hanif", *Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society*", XIX, 1939, pp. 1-13.

2. See for instance Hitti, *op.cit*, 108; Watt, *M. at M*, 162-163 and *E.I.*, III, 166. See also below, text.

to suggest that the word was used for the first time in the Qur'ân and that also in a sense oppposite to that put on it by the Syriac-speaking Christians; for he states that Muḥammad (ﷺ) adopted the term from "the language of those from whom he had hitherto taken his information." Now, is it at all reasonable that he should still be adopting the expression of the Jews and Christians when he was breaking with them, if it had not been in use and understood by the Arabs?

The fact is that the word *ḥanîf* was obviously in use in Arabia at the time in the sense of a monotheist. This seems to be a corollary even of Bell's own argument; for, if the Syriac-speaking Christians used the term to denote the Arabs who followed their ancient native religion and if, as Bell admits, Abraham was the "progenitor" of the Arabs, their ancient and native religion could not have been anything else than monotheism. For Ibrahîm, the "progenitor", preached a religion pursuant to divine revelation and that religion, according to both Jews and Christians, was monotheism. That naturally was the ancient and native religion of the Arabs. This meaning of the term *ḥanîf* appears to have been in a way admitted lately by Bell's close disciple, Watt, who recognizes that in some Aramaean circles the "primary" meaning of the term as "heathen" or "pagans" was "overshadowed by secondary connotations", such as "philosophically-minded persons who were essentially monotheistic". He further says that the Qur'ânic usage "neglected the primary meaning and developed some of the secondary connotations, a semantic process not unknown elsewhere..."[1] It may be pointed out that the Qur'ân did not *neglect* what is called the "primary meaning", nor did it *develop* "some of the secondary connotations" of the word. It simply used the expression in the sense in which the Arabs had been using and understanding it since time immemorial.

Apart from the question of the origin and connotations of the word, however, the main theme of the Jefefery-Bell thesis, namely, that the Prophet related his teachings to the Abrahamic tradition and to *ḥanîfiyyah* after his migration to Madina, particularly after differences had developed between him and the Jews of that place, is totally wrong. The underlying premise of the theory, it may be pointed out, is that the Qur'ân is the Prophet's own production, a view which is not at all correct. It is also not correct, as shown before, that the Prophet developed his doctrines at Makka by drawing

1. *E.I.*, III, 166.

information from the Jews and Christians. Neither did he borrow information from them at Makka, nor did he fall back to the Abrahamic tradition and *ḥanifiyyah* at Madina in order to break away from them.

Three broad facts in the Qur'ân contradict this latter assumption. In the first place, the reference to and declaration of identity with the message of Ibrâhîm, and indeed with the messages of all the previous Prophets, were made for the first time not at Madina but much earlier at Makka. A number of the Makkan passages of the Qur'ân bear an eloquent testimony to this fact. It was also at Makka that the Prophet emphasized the common origin and the essential identity of the messages delivered by all the Prophets, including those who came before Ibrâhîm, such as Nûḥ and 'Adam. This is very significant; for there is clearly an element of inconsistency in recognizing, as Bell seems to do, that Muḥammad (ﷺ) claimed that God's revelation had originally been the same to all the Prophets and then to allege that he traced the origin of his message to Ibrâhîm with a view to claiming precedence and greater purity for his monotheism. Secondly, it was also at Makka, long before the migration to Madina, that departures from the fundamental doctrines of both Judaism and Christianity had been made. Thirdly, it was in the Makkan passages of the Qur'ân that reference to the *ḥanîfs* occurs first. A look at the references to Ibrâhîm as a *ḥanîf* in the Madinan *sûrahs* makes it clear that there is no indication whatsoever of an intention to disregard the messages of Moses and Jesus, nor is there the slightest departure from the emphasis on the unity and identity of the messages of all the Prophets.

Before illustrating the above mentioned facts by some of the relevant statements of the Qur'ân, it is necessary to refer briefly to the question of the change of *qibla* (direction for prayer) from Jerusalem to Makka which Bell mentions as an instance of the Prophet's changed attitude towards the Jews. The refixing of the *qibla* of course took place after his arrival at Madina, but this happened some sixteen or seventeen months after his arrival there,[1] in mid-Rajab of the second year of *hijrah*. This means that it had taken place more than two clear months before the battle of Badr which occurred in Ramaḍân of that year. It is well-known that differences with the Jews began

1. *Bukhârî*, no. 399 (*Fatḥ al-Bârî*, I, 598, *Kitâb al-Ṣalât*, *Bâb* 31); Azraqî, *Akhbâr Makka*, II, 19. There is also a report to the effect that the event took place only two months after the *hijrah* (see *Ibn Mâjah*, no. 1010, Vol. I, 322, *Kitâb* 5, *Bâb* 56), but this does not seem to be correct.

to develop sometime after that battle. Hence, whatever might have been the reason for the change of *qibla* it cannot be historically sustained that the measure was an upshot of the differences with the Jews. If it had been in any way a result of the Prophet's own decision he would have timed it more opportunely, and not when, by all accounts, his position at Madina was not yet stabilized and when, far from doing anything which was likely to alienate the Jews, he was attempting to secure their support and adhesion to the newly established body-politic. It is also somewhat antithetical to suggest, as Bell does, that the Prophet intended to make Makka the centre of his religion when, at the same time, he is said to have been "planning revenge" against that town.

(A) IDENTITY WITH IBRÂHÎM IN THE MAKKAN PASSAGES

The reference to the message of Ibrâhîm, indeed to that of all the previous Prophets, was made repeatedly at Makka. It was also there that the fundamental unity and continuity of the messages delivered by all the Prophets was unmistakably emphasized. Throughout the Makkan period one constant item of persuasion directed to the Quraysh unbelievers was that there had gone by generations before them on whom God's wrath had fallen on account of their rejection of the message delivered to them by the Prophets sent to them. It was also clearly pointed out that all those Prophets came with the same message of monotheism. One of the earliest passages of the Qur'ân emphasizes this fact and makes specific mention of both Ibrâhîm and Mûsâ (Moses) as bearers of the same message. It runs as:

﴿إن هذا لفي الصحف الأولىٰ * صحف إبرٰهيم وموسىٰ﴾ (٨٧ : ١٨-١٩)

"Verily this (the Qur'ânic message) is in the early scriptures, the scriptures of Ibrâhîm and Mûsâ." (87:18-19).

Another Makkan passage asserts:

﴿وما أرسلنا من قبلك من رسول إلا نوحي إليه أنه لا إلـٰه إلا أنا فاعبدون﴾ (٢١ : ٢٥)

"Not a Messenger did We send before you except that We revealed to him that there is no God but I. So worship Me." (21:25).

Indeed, the instances of the previous Prophets, the monotheism of everyone of them and the unity and continuity of the same message through generations are detailed in a number of the Makkan passages.[1] Also especial emphasis is sometimes laid on Ibrâhîm, Mûsâ and 'Isâ (Jesus) if only

1. See for instance Q. 6:74-90; 7:59-93; 7:103-129; 10:13; 10:47; 10:71-92; 16:36; 16:43-44; 16:120-123; 19:1-58; 20:9-99; 21:25; 21:51-93; 23:23-50; 26:10-191.

because the immediate audience to whom the Qur'ân was addressed especially cherished the memories of those Prophets and claimed to follow their examples and traditions. But there never was a suggestion that the message and teachings of any one of them were "purer" than those of any other Prophet.

One of the passages which illustrates this point very forcefully is 6:83-90 which, after describing Ibrâhîm's struggle to bring home the theme of monotheism to his people, mentions all the well-known Prophets and concludes by categorically asking the listeners to adopt and follow the guidance which those Prophets represented. The passage runs as follows:

﴿وتلك حجتنا ءاتينـٰها إبرٰهيم على قومه نرفع درجـٰت من نشاء إن ربك حكيم عليم * ووهبنا له إسحـٰق ويعقوب كلا هدينا ونوحا هدينا من قبل ومن ذريته داود وسليمـٰن وأيوب ويوسف وموسىٰ وهـٰرون وكذٰلك نجزى المحسنين * وزكريا ويحيىٰ وعيسىٰ وإلياس كل من الصـٰلحين * وإسمـٰعيل واليسع ويونس ولوطا وكلا فضلنا على العـٰلمين * ومن ءابائهم وذريـٰتهم وإخوٰنهم واجتبينـٰهم وهدينـٰهم إلى صرٰط مستقيم * ذٰلك هدى الله يهدى به من يشاء من عباده ولو أشركوا لحبط عنهم ما كانوا يعملون * أولـٰئك الذين ءاتينـٰهم الكتـٰب والحكم والنبوة فإن يكفر بها هـٰؤلاء فقد وكلنا بها قوما ليسوا بها بكـٰفرين * أولـٰئك الذين هدى الله فبهدىٰهم اقتده...﴾ (٦: ٨٣-٩٠)

"That was Our evidence (proof / writ) We gave Ibrâhîm as against his people. We elevate in ranks whom We will. Surely your Lord is All-Wise, All-Knowing. And We gave him Isḥâq (Isaac) and Ya'qûb (Jacob); each We guided. And Nûḥ (Noah) We had guided before; and of his progeny, Dâ'ûd (David), Sulaymân (Solomon), 'Ayyûb (Job), Yûsuf (Joseph), Mûsâ (Moses) and Hârûn (Aaron): and thus do We reward those who do good deeds. And Zakariyyâ and Yaḥyâ (John), and 'Îsâ (Jesus) and Ilyâs (Elias) — all were righteous; and Ismâ'îl and Elisha and Yûnus (Jona) and Lûṭ (Loṭ), and all of them We selected among the creations; and of their fathers, their progeny and their brothers: and We selected them and guided them to a straight path. This is God's guidance. He guides therewith whom he pleases of His servants. Had they (those Prophets) associated other gods with Him, all that they used to do would have gone in vain. Those are they to whom We gave the Book, the authority and prophethood. Then if these (their descendants) reject them, We shall entrust them (the Book, propphethood, etc.,) to a people who do not reject them. Those were they whom God gave guidance. So follow the guidance they had..." (6:83-90).

To the same effect is the rather long passage, 21:71-92. It also comes after a description of Ibrâhîm's efforts to convert his people to monotheism (*'âyahs* 53-70) and refers briefly to the same mission of the different Prophets like Isḥâq, Ya'qûb (Jacob), Lûṭ, Nûḥ, Dâ'ûd, Sulaymân, 'Ayyûb, Ismâ'îl, Idrîs, Dhû al-Kifl, Dhû al-Nûn (Yûnus), Zakariyyâ and concludes by making

this very significant and unequivocal statement in *'âyah* 92 that all these Prophets constitute a single community of the same faith. The *'âyah* runs as:

﴿إن هذه أمتكم أمة وٰحدة وأنا ربكم فاعبدون﴾ (٢١ : ٩٢)

"Verily this community (of faith, religion) of yours is the same community; and I am your Lord. Therefore worship Me." (21:92)

Thus the reference to Ibrâhîm, along with the other Prophets, was made repeatedly at Makka. No distinction was made in favour of any one of them. It was also at Makka that all the fundamental differences that exist between Islam on the one hand and Judaism and Christianity on the other were enunciated. Thus the Jews' view that Jesus was not a Prophet but an impostor and the Christians' belief that he was not a man but an incarnation of God were simultaneously and equally strongly denied. Again, the concept of a son or sons for God, held by both the Jews and Christians, was rejected in no unmistakable terms. Further, the Jews' outrageous insinuation against Mary was categorically dismissed. It was also pointed out, contrary to the views of both the Jews and the Christians, that on the Day of Judgement every person would be responsible for his own acts, that he would be singly and individually accountable to God and that neither race, nor ancestry nor any general atonement by any being would be of any avail.[1] In all these respects what followed at Madina was only an elaboration of these points.

(B) *ḤANÎF* IN THE MAKKAN PASSAGES

Similarly the term *ḥanîf* occurs first in the Makkan passages of the Qur'ân. As Bell notes, it is used 12 times in the Qur'ân, 10 times in the singular form and 2 times in the plural; but he seems to convey an impression that all these 12 mentions of the word are in the Madinan passages. This is not at all the case. In fact, out of the 12 times, exactly its half, i.e., six times, we find it mentioned in the Makkan *surahs*. These are:

10:105 (*sûrat Yûnus*)
16:120 (*sûrat al-Naḥl*)
16:123 (*sûrat al-Naḥl*)
30:30 (*sûrat al-Rûm*)
6:79 (*sûrat al-'An'âm*)
6:161 (*sûrat al-'An'âm*)

Chronologically, the earliest mention of the term seems to be in 30: 30

1. See *sûrah* 112 and 19:16-35, 80, 88-93; 99:6-8; 101:6-11.

(*sûrat al-Rûm*) where it is clearly set against *shirk* or polytheism. For, in the previous *'âyahs* 20-29 the instances of the creation of man, of sexes and of various natural phenomena by God are cited to bring home the theme of His existence and absolute unity and the need for worshipping Him alone. Then a direct exhortation is made to do so in 30: 30 as follows:

﴿ فأقم وجهك للدين حنيفاً فطرت الله التى فطر الناس عليها ... ﴾ (٣٠ : ٣٠)

"So set your countenance for the *dîn* (faith) as a *ḥanîf* — the original nature on which Allah created man." (30:30)

The original state (*fiṭrah*) spoken of here clearly refers not to what is often called "natural religion", but to the purity of mind and heart at birth, unaffected by external influences or acquired habits and thoughts — unadulterated devotion and resignation to Allah alone. The meaning is made further clear in the *'âyahs* that immediately follow where man is asked to turn to God alone, to seek His protection, pray to Him and not to associate any partner with him.

Similarly the statement in 10:105 is very early. Here again the term is used as an antonym of polytheism. The early date of the passage is indicated by the context as well as by the immediately preceding and succeeding *'âyahs*. Thus in 10:104 Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) is asked to clarify the nature of his faith. This is done obviously in response to the doubts and enquiries of the Makkan polytheists. And in *'âyah* 106 the meaning of *ḥanîf* is elucidated. The passage, 10:104-106, runs as follows:

﴿ قل يــأيها الناس إن كنتم فى شك من دينى فلا أعبد الذين تعبدون من دون الله ولكن أعبد الله الذى يتوفــكم وأمرت أن أكون من المؤمنين ٭ وأن أقم وجهك للدين حنيفا ولا تكونن من المشركين ٭ ولا تدع من دون الله ما لا ينفعك ولا يضرك فإن فعلت فإنك إذاً من الظــلمين ﴾

"Say O men, if you are in doubt about my faith (*dîn*), then (note that) I do not worship those whom you worship instead of Allah; but I worship Allah Who causes you to die; and I have been commanded that I should be of the believers; and that you set your countenance for the *dîn* as a *ḥanîf* and in no wise be of the polytheists. And do not call, apart from Allah, on that which neither benefits nor harms you. If you do, you will certainly be of the wrongdoers." (10:104-106).

The reference to those objects of worship, i.e. the idols, that had no power to do good or evil is another internal evidence of the Makkan situation in which the passage was revealed.

In the same sense and in a similar context the term is used in 6: 79. Indeed this section of the *sûrah* starts with its *'âyah* 71 which is an inter-

rogation signifying denial: "Shall we call, besides Allah, on others that can do us neither good nor harm?" The succeeding *'âyahs* then narrate Ibrâhîm's rejection of the unreal gods leading to his declaration, in *'âyah* 79 as follows:

﴿إني وجّهتُ وجهي للذى فطر السمٰوات والأرض حنيفا و ما أنا من المشركين﴾ (٦ : ٧٩)

"I have turned my face to Him Who brought into being the heavens and the earth, as a *ḥanîf*, and I am not a polytheist." (6: 79).

The term occurs again at a later stage of the *sûrah* in its *'âyah* 161. Here also the context signifies that the passage was revealed at Makka. The preceding *'âyahs* 156-158 specially address the Arabs, or rather the Makkans, telling them that they should accept the guidance because they could no longer plead that whereas the Jews and Christians had each been given a book, none had been given to them (the Arabs), adding that now that they had been given a Book (Qur'ân), should they still be waiting for further "signs" or angels or God Himself to descend to them? This is followed, in *'âyahs* 159-160, by the statement that the Prophet had nothing to do with "those who created divisions in their religion and became sects" and that everyone would get just reward for what he did. 'Â*yah* 161 then asks the Prophet to declare:

﴿قل إنني هدىٰني ربّى إلى صرٰط مستقيم دينا قِيَمًا ملة إبرٰهيم حنيفا وما كان من المشركين﴾ (٦ : ١٦١)

"Say: As for me, my Lord has guided me to a straight path — a correct *dîn*, the way of Ibrâhîm as a *ḥanîf*, and he was not a polytheist." (6:161).

The allusion to "those who create divisions in their religion" etc. may mean, as the commentators point out,[1] the Jews and Christians who had each received a Book, or it may mean generally those who cause divisions in their religion by making innovations or in other ways. But even if the allusion is taken to be to the Jews and Christians, it would not be a departure from the context; for the Makkan opposition had been alleging that the Prophet was giving out what he was being prompted by some of his Christian and Jewish confidants. It would therefore be very appropriate to point out that he had nothing to do with them.

The other two Makkan mentions of the term *ḥanîf* occur in 16: 120 and 16:123. In fact all the four *'âyahs* of this passage form a distinct unit in which, again, the emphasis is on monotheism and rejection of all shades of polytheism. The passage runs as follows:

1. See for instance Al-Qurṭubî, *Tafsîr*, VII, 149-150.

﴿إن إبر ٰهيم كان أمة قانتا لله حنيفا ولم يك من المشركين * شاكرا لأنعمه اجتبـــه وهدٮـــه إلى صر ٰط مستقيم * وءاتينـــه في الدنيا حسنة وإنه في الأخرة لمن الصـــلحين * ثم أوحينا إليك أن اتبع ملة إبر ٰهيم حنيفا وما كان من المشركين﴾ (١٦: ١٢٠-١٢٣)

"Ibrâhîm was indeed a model, devoutly obedient to Allah as a *ḥanîf*, and was not a polytheist — thankful for His favours. He (Allah) chose him (as His Prophet) and guided him to a straight way. And We gave him good in this world; and in the hereafter he will be (in the ranks) of the righteous. Then We revealed to you that you follow the religion of Ibrâhîm, as a *ḥanîf*, and he was not a polytheist." (16:120-123.)

Before passing on to the Madinan passages the points illustrted by the Makkan passages may be recapitulated. First and foremost, it is clear that the reference to *ḥanîf* as well as to the message of Ibrâhîm was made at Makka, long before the migration to Madina. Second, in all the six instances of its use in the Makkan *sûrahs* the term *ḥanîf* has been used in the sense of an absolute monotheist who rejected all shades of polytheism. Third, in at least two of these six places, i.e., in 30:30 and 10:105, the word has been used without any reference to Ibrâhîm. This means that the word has been used in a generic sense of a monotheist and, obviously, in the sense in which it was generally understood by the audience. There is thus no question of the Qur'ân's, and therefore of Muḥammad's (ﷺ) putting a new and unusual sense on the word. Fourth, though in the four other places Ibrâhîm has been cited as a model monotheist, there has been no attempt whatsoever to relegate any other Prophet to a secondary position, nor is there any suggestion that their teachings differed in any essential respect from those of Ibrâhîm. While emphasis has been laid on Ibrâhîm understandahly because his memories were specially cherished by the immediate listeners, the Arabs, the Jews and the Chistians, the identity and continuity of the messages of all the Prophets have been unmistakably pointed out at the same time, as is evidenced by 6:83-90 which comes immediately after a reference to Ibrâhîm as a *ḥanîf* and which has been mentioned above.

(C) *ḤANÎF* IN THE MADINAN PASSAGES

What followed at Madina was only an elaboration of these points and principles. The Madinan statements are of course made more often in the context of the position of the Jews and the Christians; but the same emphasis on absolute monotheism, the same reiteration of the identity and continuity of the messages of all the Prophets and the same generic use of the term *ḥanîf* are as clear here as in the Makkan *sûrahs*. As in the case of the Makkan passages so also in those of the Madinan, in two out of the six places the

term *ḥanîf* has been used in a generic sense and in the plural without any reference to Ibrâhîm.

One such use is in 22:30-31 which runs as follows:

﴿ ... فاجتنبوا الرجس من الأوثـــن واجتنبوا قول الزور * حنفاء لله غير مشركين به... ﴾ (٢٢: ٣٠-٣١)

"... Hence steer clear of the filth of idols (polytheism) and shun telling falsehood (about Allah) — being *ḥunafâ'* for Allah, without associating others with Him." (22:30-31)

The generic use of the term as well as the emphasis on monotheism are unmistakable here. It is also noteworthy that the concluding phrase "without associating others with Him" is an elucidation of and in apposition to the expression *ḥunafâ' lillâh* (حنفاء لله).

The other generic use of the term without any reference to Ibrâhîm is in 98:5 which runs as follows:

﴿ وما أُمِرُوا إلا ليعبدوا الله مخلصين له الدين حنفاء... ﴾

"And they had not been commanded except to worship Allah, being sincerely and exclusively devoted to Him as *ḥunafâ'*..."

Here again the term *ḥunafâ'* is in apposition to the expression:"being sincerely and exclusively devoted to Him."

In the remaining four Madinan passages the term is of course used in connection with Ibrâhîm; but the same sense of an absolute monotheist and the same uncompromising rejection of polytheism are explicit throughout. At these four places the statements are made in the context of dialogues with the "People of the Book", more particularly the Jews. The most noteworthy point in these passages is that Ibrâhîm is cited not for the purpose of claiming the Arabs' exclusive affinity with him nor for asserting any precedence or superiority over the teachings of Moses and Jesus, but for illustrating, first, the inconsistency of the claims of the Jews and Christians themselves that they were bearers of the true Abrahamic tradition and, secondly, to contradict their assertions that Ibrâhîm himself was a "Jew" or "Christian" and that none would attain salvation and enter paradise except those who became Jews or Christians.[1] As against such claims it was pointed out that while they called upon the others to become either Jews or Christians, they themselves were irreconcilably divided, the Jews alleging that the Christians had nothing to stand upon, and the Christians claiming that the Jews had nothing to stand

1. See for instance Q. 2:111.

upon, though they both studied the Book. It is also made very plain that the underlying issue is monotheism and the identity and continuity of the messages of all the Prophets of God. A look at the passages makes these very clear.

The statement at 2:135 runs as follows:

﴿وقالوا كونوا هودا أو نصـٰـرىٰ تهتدوا قل بل ملة إبرٰهيم حنيفا وما كان من المشركين﴾ (٢ : ١٣٥)

"And they say: Be Jews or Christians, you will get guidance. Say (to them, follow): Rather the religion of Ibrâhîm, the *ḥanîf*; and he was none of a polytheist."(2:135)

This statement comes as a sequel to a rather detailed account of Moses and his efforts to bring home the theme of monotheism to the Children of Israel (*'âyahs* 47-134). In the course of this long account four points are specially stressed. First, it is made very clear that the argument is directed not against the Jews and Christians in general nor as their being followers of Moses and Jesus, but against the particular notions and practices that were adopted in the names of those Prophets. Hence it is stated unequivocally: "Those among the Jews and Christians who sincerely believe in God and in the Day of Judgement, and do good deeds, they would have their rewards from their Lord and would have nothing to fear nor any cause to grieve" (*'âyah* 2:62).[1] Second, it is pointed out that it was only a section of the Jews who consciously and knowingly tampered with the Scripture, while the uninformed section of them merely followed their desires and whims without being really aware of what the Scripture teaches (*'âyahs* 2:75,78). Third, it is stated in the same strain that the message contained in the Book of Moses did not stop with him, for God followed it up by sending other Prophets including Jesus; but nonetheless the Jews, when they found that the divine message was not in accord with their likes and dislikes, they belied some of the Prophets and killed some others (*'âyah* 2:87).[2] In this connection the error in the claim that none but a Jew or a Christian would enter paradise is pointed out and it is reiterated that only he who submits wholeheartedly to God and does good deeds will receive His rewards (*'âyahs* 2:111-112). Also

1. The text runs as follows:

﴿إن الذين ءامنوا والذين هادوا والنصـٰـرىٰ والصـٰـبـٔين من ءامن بالله واليوم الأخر وعمل صـٰـلحا فلهم أجرهم عند ربهم ولا خوف عليهم ولا هم يحزنون﴾

2. The text runs as follows:

﴿ولقد ءاتينا موسى الكتـٰـب وقفينا من بعده بالرسل وءاتينا عيسى ابن مريم البينـٰـت وأيدنـٰـه بروح القدس أفكلما جاءكم رسول بما لا تهوىٰ أنفسكم استكبرتم ففريقا كذبتم وفريقا تقتلون﴾

the notion of God's son, common to both the Jews and the Christians, is strongly rebutted (*'ayahs* 2:116-117). Finally, referring specifically to Ibrâhîm and Ya'qûb, with whom the Jews and Christians decalred their affinity, it was pointed out that they both had enjoined upon their progeny and successors to worship the One Only God and to submit to Him wholeheartedly (*'âyahs* 2:132-133). And in continuation of this argument *'âyah* 135 states: "They say, be Jews or Christians, you will get guidance. Say: Rather the religion of Ibrâhîm, the *ḥanîf*, and he was none of a polytheist."

The whole discussion here, as elsewhere, revolves round the question of monotheism. There is no claim to affinity with Ibrâhîm solely and exclusively for the Arabs or for the followers of the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ). On the contrary, the burden of the whole discussion is that, since the Jews and the Christians themselves claimed affinity with Ibrâhîm, it only behoved them to adhere strictly to the monotheism he taught and typified. That is why whenever he is described as a *ḥanîf* it is emphasized that he was no polytheist. There is no pretension to priority or superiority, nor any lowering of the Prophets of the Jews and the Christians, nor any suggestion that the teachings of one Prophet differed from those of another. The identity and continuity of the messages of all the Prophets are thus emphasized in the immediately succeeding *'âyah* 2:136 as follows:

﴿قولوا ءامنا بالله وما أنزل إلينا ومآ أنزل إلى إبرٰهيم وإسمٰعيل وإسحٰق ويعقوب والأسباط ومآ أوتي موسىٰ وعيسىٰ وما أوتي النبيون من ربهم لا نفرق بين أحد منهم ونحن له مسلمون﴾ (٢:١٣٦)

"Say ye: We believe in Allah and in what has been sent dawn to us and in what was sent down to Ibrâhîm, Ismâ'îl, Isḥâq and Ya'qûb and the Tribes, and in that given to Mûsâ and 'Îsâ and that given to (all) the Prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between one and another of them; and to Him we surrender (completely)." (2:136)

That the reference to Ibrâhîm as a *ḥanîf* was made in order to illustrate the inconsistency of the Jews' and Christians' claim of affinity with him, because of their obvious non-compliance with true monotheism, is further evident from the two other uses of the term at 3:67 and 3:95. In this *sûrah* the argument is developed from *'âyah* 33 wherein mention is first made of 'Âdam, Nûḥ and Ibrâhîm and the family of 'Imrân as the recepients of Allah's special favours. This is followed by an account, in *'âyahs* 35 through 62, of the birth and mission of 'Îsâ, in the course of which it is specially stressed that he had declared: "It is Allah Who is my Lord and your Lord; so worship Him. This

is a way that is straight."[1] It is further emphasized that the creation of Îsâ was like the creation of 'Âdam as an evidence of Allah's will and omnipotence.[2] Therefore the unusual birth of 'Îsâ should be no reason for deifying him. This is followed by a fervent appeal to both the Christians and the Jews in *'âyah* 3:64 as follows:

﴿قل يـٰـأهل الكتـٰـب تعالوا إلى كلمة سواء بيننا وبينكم ألّا نعبد إلا الله ولا نشرك به شيـئـا ولا يتخذ بعضنا بعضا أربابا من دون الله...﴾ (٣:٦٤)

"Say: O People of the Book, come to common terms as between us and you; that we worship none but Allah; that we associate no partners with Him and that we take not from among ourselves Lords and Patrons leaving aside Allah..." (3:64)

Next the unreasonableness of the claim that Ibrâhîm was a Jew or Christian is pointed out by drawing attention to the simple fact that the *Torah* and the *Injîl* which the Jews and the Christians claim to be the sources of their beliefs were not revealed till long after Ibrâhîm (*'âyahs* 3:65,66). Hence if they really meant to identify themselves with him, they could consistently do so only by conforming to absolute monotheism; for, decalres *'âyah* 3:67:

﴿ما كان إبرٰهيمُ يهوديًا ولا نصرانيًا ولكن كان حنيفا مسلما وما كان من المشركين﴾ (٣:٦٧)

"Ibrâhîm was not a Jew, nor a Christian, but a *ḥanîf* (a person of true and upright faith in Allah), a Muslim (one who surrenders himself completely to Allah alone); and he was none of a polytheist." (3:67)

The argument is continued in the succeeding *'âyah* as follows:

﴿إن أولى الناس بإبرٰهيم للّذين اتبعوه ...﴾ (٣:٦٨)

"The most deserving of men to claim identity with Ibrâhîm are indeed those who follow him (truly)....." (3:68)

The same theme of monotheism and the same emphasis on the need to follow the way of Ibrâhîm, if one really meant to identify oneself with him, are the subject matter of the *'âyahs* that follow the one quoted above till *'âyah* 3:95 which states:

﴿قل صدق اللّهُ فاتّبعوا ملة إبرٰهيم حنيفا وما كان من المشركين﴾ (٣:٩٥)

"Say: Allah speaks the truth. Hence follow the religion of Ibrâhîm, the *ḥanîf*, and he was none of a polytheist." (3:95).

In all the three above-noted passages (i.e., 2:135; 3:67 and 3:95) the reference to Ibrâhîm as a *ḥanîf* has been made in response to the claims of the

1. Q. 3:51.
2. Q. 3:59.

"People of the Book " themselves that it was they who belonged to the community of Ibrâhîm. They are therefore called upon to follow strictly the way (*millat*) of Ibrâhîm if they really meant to be true to their claim. No pretension to priority over or superiority to the messages of Mûsâ and 'Îsâ is made in any place, nor is there any suggestion that the right to claim identity with Ibrâhîm belonged exclusively to the Arabs. Further, the equality of all the Prophets and the identity of their teachings have been emphasized all along.

The other mention of the word *ḥanîf* occurs in 4:125 (*sûrat al-Nisâ'*). Here also the theme is monotheism and the emphasis is on total rejection of all shades of polytheism. This theme starts specifically with *'âyah* 116 of the *sûrah* which states: "Allah forgives not the sin of joining others with Him. He may forgive the other sins of anyone whom He pleases. Whoever associates others with Allah strays far away indeed."[1] Then *'âyahs* 117-120 state that it is the devil who dupes many into polytheism and causes them to entertain vain hopes and baseless expectations. The hopes and expectations alluded to here were clearly understood by the audience and are indeed spelt out elsewhere in the Qur'ân. These were the pagan Arabs' claim that they would not be resurrected after death for final judgement[2] and that their deities would in any case intercede with Allah on their behalf,[3] and the claims of the "People of the Book" that they were the "sons and loved ones of Allah"[4] , that they would not in any case suffer hell-fire except for a limited number of days,[5] and that none would enter paradise except a Jew or a Christian.[6] It is with reference to such notions that *'âyahs* 121-124 of the *sûrah* state, addressing the pagan Arabs as well as the People of the Book, that "neither your desires nor those of the Poeple of the Book would be of any avail."[7] At the same time

1. Q. 4:116. The text runs as follows:

﴿إن الله لا يغفر أن يشرك به ويغفر ما دون ذلك لمن يشاء ومن يشرك بالله فقد ضل ضللا بعيدا﴾

2. Q. 16:38, which states: ﴿وأقسموا بالله جهد أيمنهم لا يبعث الله من يموت...﴾ "They swear by their strongest oaths by God that God shall not resurrect those who die". See also Q. 72:7.

3. See for instance 6:94; 10:18 and 39:43.

4. Q. 5:80= ﴿وقالت اليهود والنصرى نحن أبنؤا الله وأحبؤه...﴾ "The Jews and the Christians said: We are sons of God and His loved ones".

5. Q. 2:80 & 3:24 which run respectively as: ﴿وقالوا لن تمسنا النار إلا أياما معدودة﴾ and ﴿قالوا لن تمسنا النار إلا أياما معدودات﴾ "And they said: They fire shall nor touch us but for a number of days".

6. Q. 2:111- ﴿وقالوا لن يدخل الجنة إلا من كان هودا أو نصرى﴾ "And they said: None shall enter paradise unless he be a Jew or a Christian".

7. Q. 4:123- ﴿ليس بأمانيكم ولا أمانيّ أهل الكتب من يعمل سوءا يجز به...﴾

the principle of individual responsibility and accountability is stressed by saying that whoever does a good deed and has faith will get his reward and whoever does anything wrong will be duly requited by Allah.[1] Hence, states *'âyah* 4:125, the best way is to surrender one's whole self to Allah, to do good deeds and to follow the way of Ibrâhîm, as a *ḥanîf*. The *'âyah* runs as follows:

﴿ومن أحسن دينا ممن أسلم وجهه لله وهو محسن واتبع ملة إبرٰهيم حنيفا . . . ﴾

"Who can be better in religion than the one who submits his countenance (one's whole self) to Allah, performs good deeds and follows the religion of Ibrâhîm, as a *ḥanîf*?..." (4:125).

Thus an anlysis of the twelve Qur'ânic passages (six Makkan and six Madinan) wherein the term *ḥanîf* occurs decisively demonstrates the untenability of the Jeffery-Bell theory which says that the Prophet had recourse to the expression *ḥanîf*, put a new sense of monotheist upon it and related it to the Abrahamic religion only when differences developed between him and the Jews after his migration to Madina and with a view to breaking away from both Judaism and Christianity and to winning over to his cause the pagan Arabs who cherished Ibrâhîm's memories. It has been seen that the use of the term *ḥanîf* and the reference to Ibrâhîm's message were made at Makka, at a very early stage of the Prophet's mission and long before the migration to Madina. It was also at Makka that departures from the fundamental and central doctrines of Judaism and Christianity were made. The main point at issue was monotheism. It was on this issue that the doctrines of the Trinity, of son-ship of God and of incarnation and divinity of 'Îsâ were discarded right from the beginning and the rejection was reiterated throughout the Makkan and the Madinan periods. Indeed it was in the sense of a strict and uncompromising monotheist that the term *ḥanîf* has been used all through the Makkan and the Madinan periods. Bell's suggestion that the Prophet put a new sense of the very "antithesis of polytheist" upon the term is an indirect admission that it has been used everywhere in the Qur'ân in the sense of an absolute monotheist. That no uncommon and strange sense was put upon it is shown by its generic use, without any reference to Ibrâhîm, in both the Makkan and Madinan passages. It is also quite unreasonable to assume that the Prophet put a new meaning on the term just for the sake of breaking away from the Jews and the Christians and for winning over the

1. Q. 4:122-124.

pagan Arabs to his cause; for such an unusual application of the word was more likely to create confusion and evoke criticism and misunderstanding by the Prophet's opponents. Yet, neither the Quraysh opponents nor those from the People of the Book appear to have taken any objection to the use made of the word in the Qur'ân. And imagine the situation if someone in England suddenly ventured to use the word "fool" in its directly opposite sense of "wise", applying it to an English historical figure and calling upon Englishmen to take from him that meaning for the word in respect of that national hero!

The fact is that neither was the term *ḥanîf* used in the Qur'ân in a novel sense directly opposite to the meaning in which it had hitherto been understood by the Arabs, nor was reference to the Abrahamic tradition made with a view to breaking away from Judaism and Chrsitianity. The Madinan reference to Ibrâhîm as *ḥanîf* was made in response to the claims of affinity with him made by the "People of the Book" themselves. It was plainly pointed out that far from being a Jew or a Christian, Ibrâhîm was a *ḥanîf*, an absolute monotheist, and not a polytheist. Hence they were asked to adhere to the *millat* of Ibrâhîm, if they were true to their claims. This is very significant. It means that the Qur'ân, and therefore Muḥammad (ﷺ), viewed the beliefs and practices of the Jews and Christians of the time as antithetical to monotheism and as manifest departures from the teachings of Ibrâhîm and the other Prophets. It also means that the position was just the reverse of what the Jeffery-Bell theory suggests. The Qur'ânic evidence does in no way show that Muḥammad (ﷺ), with a view to avoiding the criticism that he had borrowed the concept of monotheism and other ideas from Judaism and Christianity, traced his teachings to an "earlier" source, the teachings of Ibrâhîm. On the contrary, the evidence is that, so far as the Jews and the Christians were concerned, the reference to Ibrâhîm as a *ḥanîf* was made in response to their claim of affinity with him and in view of the obvious inconsistency of their beliefs and practices with monotheism and the teachings of Ibrâhîm. That is why it was repeatedly pointed out that he was none of a polytheist, that he was neither a Jew nor a Christian. This, together with the open call made to the "People of the Book" to follow the *millat* of Ibrâhîm or, at least, to agree to a "common" formula, namely, to worship Allah alone and not to set any partner with Him, indisputably demonstrate that the issue was not between an "earlier" and, so to say, a "purer" or first-class monotheism on the one hand, and a later or second-class monotheism on the other.

The issue was clearly between monotheism and a negation of it. In its resort to the expression *ḥanîf* and to the Abrahamic tradition at Madina the Qur'ân was not at all adopting any defensive stance as against the Jews' and Chrsitians' criticism of Islam; it was simply leading the onslaught on them on account of *their* claims of identity with Ibrâhîm and, therefore, on the inconsistency of that claim with the obvious negation of monotheism in their beliefs and practices.

CHAPTER XV

THE ORIENTALISTS AND THE *ḤANÎFS*: II. WATT'S VIEWS

Watt's views about the *ḥanîfs* are contained chiefly in his *Muḥammad at Mecca* (1953)[1], his article on *ḥanîf* in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* (1966, 1986)[2] and his *Muḥammad's Mecca* (1988).[3] His statements are based essentially on the Jeffery-Bell assumptions and on a further assumption made by Hilmi Omar Bey. The latter, shortly after the publication of Bell's article on the subject, came out in the columns of *The Moslem World*, generally supporting his views and adding that the persons to whom the term *ḥanîf* is applied in the histories and the traditions ill-suit the description of the term in the Qur'ân; that they originally did neither bear such title nor ever go out in search of Ibrâhîm's religion, but that this title was given them by later exegetes and traditionists simply to illustrate and give substance to the Qur'ânic use of the term.[4]

How closely Watt reproduces his predecessors' views may be seen from the following comparative table:

(a) Bell stated that the *ḥanîfs* were "no sect or party of historical people" but the supposed "followers of the ideal original of Arab religion."	(a) Watt reproduces the same view, quoting the very words of Bell.[5]
(b) Taking from Jeffery, but somewhat modifying his theory, Bell suggested that the word *ḥanîf* is Syriac in origin, that it was first taken in its plural form and that it meant "heathen".	(b) Watt adopts and advances the same view.[6]

1. Pp. 162-164 (Excursus C).
2. *E.I.*, III, New edn. 1986, pp. 165-166.
3. Pp. 37-38.
4. *M.W.*, 1932, pp. 72-75.
5. *M. at M.*, p. 162.
6. *E.I.*, III, 1986, p. 166, col. 2.

(c) Bell suggested that the Qur'ân put a new and directly opposite meaning of monotheist upon the term.

(c) Watt adopts more or less the same view, only modifying it in that the Qur'ân, according to him, "developed" a "secondary meaning" of a monotheist for the term as used in some Aramaic circles.[1]

(d) Taking his cue from Jeffery, Bell suggested that the Qur'ânic use of *ḥanîf* and the resort to the Abrahamic tradition were made at Madina when the Prophet's relations with the Jews became strained and in order to break away from Judaism and Christianity.

(d) Watt reproduces in effect the same thesis saying that the Qur'ânic concept of *ḥanîfiyyah* "is closely linked with the resistance of the Muslims to the intellectual criticisms of Muḥammad's religion by Jews and Christians"—that it was "part of the Qur'ânic apologetic against Judaism and Christianity."[2]

(e) Again, taking his cue from Jeffery, Bell suggested that the Prophet's religion was initially even called *ḥanîfiyyah* and that the technical use of *Islam* and *Muslim* was not made before 2 A.H.

(e) Watt reiterates the same view adding that such technical use of *Islam* and *Muslim* was made even later than 2 H.[3]

(f) Supporting Bell's views on the subject H.O. Bey added that it was the later Muslim historians who mentioned several persons as *ḥanîfs* to illustrate the Qur'ânic use of the term; but they themselves did not bear that designation.

(f) Watt reproduces and builds on the same view.[4]

Now, the utter untenability of the main thesis that resort to *ḥanîf* and the

1. *E.I.*, III, 1986, p. 116, Col. 2.
2. *M. at M.*, 162; *E.I.*, III, 1986, p. 165; *Muḥammad's Mecca*, 37, 38.
3. *E.I.*, III, 1986, p. 165, Col. 2: *Muḥammad's Mecca*, 38.
4. *M. at M.*, 162; *Muḥammad's Mecca*, 37; *E.I.*, III, 1986, p. 166.

Abrahamic tradition made "its appearance", as Watt puts it, "early in the Madinan period when the Prophet's relation with the Jews became strained"[1] and that the concept of *ḥanîfiyyah* "is closely linked with the resistance of the Muslims to the intellectual criticisms of Muḥammad's religion by Jews and Christians",[2] has been shown above. It has been seen that the term *ḥanîf* and the reference to Ibrâhîm were used at Makka, from the very early stage of the Prophet's mission, and not at all in response to Jewish and Christian criticisms. On the contrary, at Madina such references to *ḥanîf* and to the Abrahamic tradition were made in response to the claims of identity with Ibrâhîm made by the "People of the Book" themselves and in order to point out the inconsistency of that claim with the lack of monotheism in their beliefs and practices. Nor is there any question of the Muslims' defending themselves, as Watt puts it, "by saying that their religion is the pure worship of God, revealed by Him to previous prophets and to Muḥammad",[3] because of the "hostile suggestion that most Qur'ânic ideas came from Judaism and Christianity."[4] For, the reference to *ḥanîfiyyah* and the Abrahamic tradition was made at Madina not as against any such suggestion of the Jews and the Christians, but as against their obvious non-compliance with the requisites of monotheism. Nor is it true that "most Qur'ânic ideas came from Judaism and Christianity." The orientalists themselves, and Watt in particular, admit that Muḥammad (ﷺ) did not himself read the Judaeo-Christian scriptures. It has also been shown[5] that the theory of his having been taught the lessons in Christianity by private tutors or of his having picked up information from the ordinary Jews and Christians whom he chanced to meet is equally untenable and unreasonable. Also, the fundamental teachings of the Qur'ân differred from those of Judaism and Christianity right from the beginning; and denunciation of the latter was very pointedly made at Makka. Even the Madinan references to *ḥanîf* and the Abrahamic tradition give an instructive insight into the Qur'ân's attitude to the Judaism and the Christianity of the day. Hence the prejudice which suggests that most Qur'ânic ideas came from Judaism and Christianity should at once be discarded if one really means to understand, and not to underestimate, Islam. At all events, the thesis that

1. *M. at M.*, 162.
2. *Ibid.*, 163.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Muḥammad's Mecca*, 37.
5. *Supra*, Ch. XI, especially secs. III & IV.

resort to *ḥanîfiyyah* and the Abrahamic tradition was made for the first time at Madina, and that too for breaking with Judaism and Christianity, is a totally wrong and calculatedly misleading statement.

In their eagerness to bring home the theme of what is called "the Qur'ânic apologetic against Judaism and Christianity" the orientalists, particularly Watt, fail to see the inconsistency in their assertions. Thus if *ḥanîfiyyah* "must indeed for a time have been the name applied to Muḥammad's religion", and if the "technical use of *Islâm* and *Muslim*" was not made before the end of 2 H., it cannot at the same time be suggested that the concepts of *ḥanîf* and *ḥanîfiyyah* did not come into existence except early in the Madinan period, i.e., around 2 H., when the Prophet allegelly adopted the terms *Islâm* and *Muslim* and also fell out with the Jews and made use of *ḥanîf* and *ḥanîfiyyah* for the first time as against the latter! Yet Watt, following his predecessors, would have his readers take this glaring inconsistency from him!

Again, Watt admits that in "most" cases (in fact always) the Qur'ânic use of the term *ḥanîf* "is contrasted with the idolaters *mushrikûn*)" and that as religion *ḥanîfiyyah* "is contrasted with polytheism" and, as he says, "with the 'corrupted' monotheism of the Jews and Christians."[1] Surely, then, no premise of strained relationship with the Jews is called for to explain the use of the term. The premise, stark polytheism and idolatry existed there at Makka itself, and blatantly enough, to call for a protest against it. It may also be pointed out that the expression "corrupted monotheism of the Jews and Christians" is Watt's own formulation. So far as the Qur'ânic use of *ḥanîf* and *ḥanîfiyyah* as against the "People of the Book" is concerned, it (the Qur'ân) simply did not view them as monotheists so that it called upon them at least to come to a common term of worshipping the only One God and not setting any partner with Him.

The use of *ḥanîf* and *ḥanîfiyyah* was indeed made at Makka and long before the migration and development of differences with the Jews. They were also used interchangeably with *Muslim* and *Islâm*. But it is not at all correct to say that the tecnical use of *Islâm* and *Muslim* started only after 2 H. Making due allowance for Bell's dissection and dating of the Qur'ânic passages, (and it is well worth remembering that even Watt himself does not accept in toto Bell's suggestions in this respect), there still remain many Makkan and early passages of the Qur'ân wherein the two terms are used

1. *E.I.*, III, new edition, 1986, p. 165.

very much technically. In fact there are at least three dozen Makkan passages[1] where one or the other of the two words occurs and where it carries either a technical sense or both the technical and general senses.

The earliest technical use of the term *Muslim* occurs in 68:35-36. This *sûrah* (*al-Qalam*) is very early in the order of revelation, its first four *'âyahs* being considered by the classical Muslim scholars as only the second in the order of revelation, while from the internal evidence it is clear that the rest of the *sûrah* was revealed not much later than its first part, definitely at Makka. The passage runs as follows:

﴿أفنجعل المسلمين كالمجرمين * ما لكم كيف تحكمون﴾ (٦٨: ٣٥- ٣٦)

"Shall We then treat the *Muslims* at par with the sinners? What is the matter with you? How (strangely) do you judge?" (68: 35- 36).

This statement is made in rebuttal of the Makkan unbelievers' remarks that if they were at all to be resurrected after death they would get the same respectable and influential position in the hereafter as they enjoyed in the Makkan society.[2]

This passage alone is sufficient to disprove the assumption about the commencement of the technical use of *Muslim* and *Islam*. A few other passages may be cited, however, by way of illustrating not only the early Makkan application of the terms in their technical senses but also in showing (a) that, as in the case of the expression *ḥanîf*, so also in that of *Muslim* (and *Islâm*) it has been used in the sense of an absolute monotheist and in contrast with a polytheist, and (b) that it has been used in respect of all the previous Prophets and their followers.

Some of the relevant passages are:

(1) 15:2 — ﴿رُبَما يود الذين كفروا لو كانوا مسلمين﴾

"Perhaps (often) those who disbelieve would wish if only they had been Muslims."

This statement is made with reference to the state of the unbelievers on the Day of Judgement.

(2) 43:69 — ﴿الذين ءامنوا بـايـتنا وكانوا مسلمين﴾

"Those who believed in Our signs and were Muslims..."

The reference here is to the position of the Muslims in the hereafter.

1. See F.A. Bâqi, *Al-Mu'jam al-Mufahras li Alfâẓ al-Qur'ân al-Karîm*, under س ل م
2. See for instance *Tafsîr al-Bayḍâwî*, II, Beirut print, 517.

(3) 21:108 — ﴿قل إنما يوحَى إليَّ أنما إلـٰـهكم إلـٰـه واحد فهل أنتم مسلمون﴾

"Say: Verily it has been revealed to me that your Lord is only the One God. So are you Muslims (i.e. those who surrender themselves to the One God)?"

(4) & (5) 27:81 and 30: 53 — ﴿... إن تُسمِعُ إلا من يؤمن بـئـايـٰـتنا فهم مسلمون﴾

"You can make only those who believe in Our signs listen (to guidance) and so they are Muslims."

The statement is made in the context of the Makkan unbelievers' obstinate opposition.

(6) 41:33 — ﴿ومن أحسن قولا ممن دعا إلى الله وعمل صـٰـلحا وقال إنني من المسلمين﴾

"And who is better in speech than the one who calls men towards Allah and does good deeds and says: 'I am a Muslim'?"

(7) 39:22 — ﴿أفمن شرح الله صدره للإسلام فهو على نور من ربه...﴾

"Is one whose heart Allah has opened to *Islam*, so that he is on a light (enlightenment) from his Lord...".

(8) 11:14 — ﴿فإن لم يستجيبوا لكم فاعلموا أنما أنزل بعلم الله وأن لا إلـٰـه إلا هو فهل أنتم مسلمون﴾

"But if they respond not to you then know that it has been revealed with Allah's knowledge, and that there is no god but He. So are you Muslims?"

This statement is made in the context of a challenge given to the unbelievers of Makka to produce some texts like that of the Qur'ân, if they did not concede it to be Allah's revelation, and their failure to meet the challenge.

(9) 10:72 — ﴿فإن توليتم فما سألتكم من أجر إن أجرى إلا على الله وأمرت أن أكون من المسلمين﴾

"But if you turn back, then (look), no reward have I asked of you. My reward is only with Allah and I have been commanded to be a Muslim."

This statement is put in the mouth of Prophet Nûḥ in his address to his people.

(10) 10:84 — ﴿وقال موسى يـٰـقوم إن كنتم ءامنتم بالله فعليه توكلوا إن كنتم مسلمين﴾

"And Mûsâ said: O my people, if you do believe in Allah, then depend on Him if you are Muslims."

(11) 7:126 — ﴿ربنا أفرغ علينا صبرا وتوفنا مسلمين﴾

"O our Lord, pour on us patience and make us die as Muslims."

This prayer is put in the mouth of the followers of Moses who braved the Pharaoh's oppression and vindictiveness.

(12) 51:3 — ﴿فأخرجنا من كان فيها من المؤمنين * فما وجدنا فيها غير بيت من المسلمين﴾

"Then we evacuated whoever was in there of the believers' but we found not therein

any but one household of the *Muslims*."

This is a statement of the angels in respect of Prophet Lûṭ's people.

It would be noticed that in all the above noted passages the expressions *Islâm* and *Muslim* have been used very much in the technical senses. It should also be noted that nos. 2, 7, 8, 10 and 12 show that the term *Muslim* is coterminous with *Mu'min* and one who has faith in the One Only God; while nos. 9, 10, 11 and 12 make it clear that the previous Prophets and their followers also are designated Muslims. Most important of all, all these are Makkan passages. Hence nothing could be farther from the truth and more misleading than the assertion that the technical use of *Islâm* and *Muslim* began only after the Prophet's migration to Madina and as a reaction to his differences with the Jews. In fact, as already indicated, Watt, following his predecessors, is very inconsistent and confusing in this respect. He would have us believe that previous to the migration to Madina and the development of differences with the Jews the Prophet used *al-ḥanîfiyyah* as the name of his religion. At the same time Watt would have his readers believe that resort to *al-ḥanîfiyyah* and the Abrahamic tradition was made by the Prophet only at Madina after the Prophet had fallen out with the Jews!

This brings us to the question of the existence of actual *ḥanîfs* on the eve of the Prophet's emergence on the scene. Watt states that all "the references to the *ḥanîfs* in the early sources are attempts which illustrate the statements in the Qur'ân and that none of the persons named would have called himself a *ḥanîf* or said he was in search of the *ḥanîfiyya*."[1] Referring to the 12 Qur'ânic passages wherein the term *ḥanîf* occurs but without discussing their contexts Watt further states that there is "not the slightest hint in the Qur'ân about a *ḥanîf* movemnt in the half-century before Islam."[2] Nor is there any evidence, he stresses, "that any of the persons called a *ḥanîf* by scholars ever used this name himself, or was so called by contemporaries... the movement is entirely the creation of second-century Muslim scholars."[3] The early Muslim scholars, according to him, were "trying to give some background to certain Qur'ânic texts, or possibly countering the hostile suggestion that most Qur'ânic ideas came from Judaism and Christianity."[4] The Muslims "are to

1. *M. at M.*, 162; *E.I.*, III, 1986 p. 166, Col. 1.
2. *Muḥammad's Mecca*, 37.
3. *Ibid.*, 38.
4. *Ibid.*, 37.

defend themselves", he states at another place, "by saying that their religion is the pure worship of God, revealed by him to previous prophets and to Muḥammad."[1] Yet, depending clearly upon the names and facts supplied only by the early Muslim scholars, Watt states at the same time that the individuals named "may nevertheless have been feeling their way towards monotheism" and that the very existence of these men affords "an additional illustration of the way in which monotheism was permeating the environment in which Muḥammad grew up..."[2] "The movement and individuals exist but any assertion that some one is a *ḥanîf* (in the Islamic sense) is the work of a later Muslim apologete..."[3]

Thus does Watt, while pointing out that the Qur'ân does not speak of a *ḥanîf* movement as such and while also stating that the *ḥanîf* movement "is entirely the creation of second century Muslim scholars", assert at the same time that the movement and individuals did exist but that the names *ḥanîf* and *al-ḥanîfiyya* are "the work of a later Muslim apologete". The apparent inconsistency or rather the net objection to the terms *ḥanîf* and *al-ḥanîfiyyah* may be easily explained.

Although Goldziher pointed out that the Muslim historians speak only of a few individuals seeking monotheism and not of any movement as such towards monotheism, Sprenger's suggestion that Muḥammad (ﷺ) got his inspiration from those individuals fell in line with the theory that he had borrowed his information from Judaism and Christianity. The idea soon suggested itself that the individuals who went out in search of monotheism themselves imbibed the spirit of monotheism from Judaism and Christianity and that there was a trend or movement towards monotheism fostered by those two religions. Muḥammad (ﷺ) not only borrowed a good deal from those two systems, he also received his impetus for monotheism from the prevailing trend. The sole objection to bringing this theory home was the concept of *al-ḥanîfiyyah* and indeed the reference to the Abrahamic tradition. It thus became necessary to do away with or to dislodge *ḥanîf* and *al-ḥanîfiyyah*. Hence the onslaught on them, just as the orientalists make the onslaught on the Abrahamic tradition itself.

To achieve their objective the orientalists have made a three-pronged

1. *E.I.*, III, 1986, p. 165.
2. *M. at M.*, 163.
3. *E.I.*, III, 1986, p. 166, Col. 2.

manoeuvre. It has been attempted to show that the term *ḥanîf* is of foreign origin and that even if current in Arabia it bore the meaning of "heathen" or follower of the old Arab native religion. Secondly, it has been suggested that Muḥammad (ﷺ), when he fell out with the Jews at Madina, traced his teachings to those of Ibrâhîm and also applied the term *ḥanîf* to him by putting the opposite sense of "monotheist" on it in order to identify his religion with the "assumed pure original of the Arab religion", that the *ḥanîfs* "were no sect or party of historical people, but the product of Muḥammad's unresting mind." These two manoeuvres were made mainly by Bell, taking his cue from Jeffery. Reiterating Bell's views, indeed quoting his very words, Watt makes the third manoeuvre. He extends the theory of Qur'ânic apology against Jewish and Christian criticism to the second-century Muslim historians alleging that they made up the stories of the *ḥanîfs* or applied the title *ḥanîf* to them to give support to the Qur'ânic apology, adding that the movement and individuals did exist, which provide an evidence of the permeation of monotheism in the environment in which Muḥammad (ﷺ) grew up. Thus, in effect, Watt grafts Sprenger's theory upon Bell's views or rather makes an amalgam of the views of Sprenger and Bell with the theory of Judaeo-Christian origin of Islam. The different elements in the compound are, however, ill-absorbed, each retaining its identity. Hence the confusing and inconsistent statements that the movement is "entirely the creation of second-century Muslim scholars" and that "the movement and individuals did exist", etc.

The assumption underlying these manoeuvres, namely, that a trend towards monotheism was fostered by Judaism and Christianity is as wrong as is the assumption that Muḥammad (ﷺ) drew his information and ideas from those two systems. The utter untenability of this latter assumption has been shown earlier.[1] That the two systems did not inspire a spirit of monotheism in the enquireres mentioned by the early historians is amply demonstrated by the fact, also noted by them at the same time, that in general those enquirers were not impressed by the two systems when these were explained to them by the savants and did not embrace either. Indeed a true historical perspective presupposes the insufficiency and inability of the prevailing systems to satisfy the curiosity of the inquisitive souls; for it is only such a situation which explains the emergence and success of a new system. The desire for

1. *Supra*, Chapter XI.

finding the original religion of Ibrâhîm was produced not by the ideas of Judaism and Christianty percolating into the environment but by a revulsion against the gross idolatry and polytheism of the time on the one hand, and by an awareness and continuance of the Abrahamic tradition which, despite the degeneration of the Arabs into idolatry, had kept alive the name and concept of Allah as the Supreme Lord, the sanctity of the Ka'ba and a number of rites connected with it. For, by no stretch of the imagination could it be suggested that these latter concepts and institutions were produced by the influence of Judaism and Christianity or that these did not exist prior to the emergence of Islam.

It is also an unwarranted assertion that the early Muslim historians fabricated the stories of the *ḥanîfs* or invented that title for them in order to give substance to the Qur'ânic statements. There is no evidence to substantiate the allegation. In making this allegation the orientalists in fact make two insinuations against the historians, that of misunderstanding the Qur'ânic reference to *ḥanîf* and that of fabrication. As Watt himself notes, the Qur'ân in no way speaks of a *ḥanîf* movement as such. Hence there was no need for the historians for finding out the *ḥanîfs* or for making up their stories. Nor is it correct to say that the individuals who sought the original Abrahamic religion were not known by the name of *ḥanîfs* or did not call themselves such. The sources clearly speak of their being known as *ḥanîfs* and also quote their own statements to the effect that they were seeking *al-ḥanîfiyyah*, the original religion of Ibrâhîm. Watt's rejection of this evidence, particularly the poems and statements attributed to those individuals, is as unjustified as it is inconsistent on his part; for in other matters he very much accepts the evidence of the poems as reflecting the actual state of affairs. In any case, there can be no doubt that the term *ḥanîf* was current in pre-Islamic Arabia, as the orientalists themselves admit; and it was used in the sense of one who subscribed to the original Abrahamic religion. The Qur'ân uses the term only in its generally accepted and understood sense, and not in an opposite and strange meaning. Thus the mere prevalence of the term in pre-Islamic Arabia is a decisive evidence that it was used with reference to a particular type of individuals. Therefore to say that none was known or called by that title is an absurd proposition.

Again, the theory of Qur'ânic apology against Judaeo-Christian criticism on which the insinuation against the Muslim historians is based is, as already pointed out, totally unfounded and untenable. To sum up the facts: (a) The

reference to Ibrâhîm, indeed to all the previous Prophets, was made at Makka, and not for the first time at Madina. (b) It was also at Makka that the expression *ḥanîf* was used in its generic sense and also with reference to Ibrâhîm and in the sense of an absolute monotheist. (c) And in so far as reference to Ibrâhîm as *ḥanîf* was made at Madina and in relation to the "People of the Book", it was done in reply to their claim of identiy with Ibrâhîm and in order to point out the inconsistency of that claim with their conspicuous polytheistic beliefs and practices. It was very pertinently pointed out that Ibrâhîm was not a polytheist, so that if they were true to their claim they should comply with the requisites of monotheism. This is all the more clear from the open call made to them to come to a common platform, that of worshipping Allah alone and not associating anyone with Him. There was thus no question of an apology or defensive posture on the part of the Qur'ân. So far as the Madinan passages are concerned, the Qur'ân's attitude in its reference to Ibrâhîm as a *ḥanîf* is one of positive onslaught on and denunciation of the polytheistic beliefs and practices of the "People of the Book". (d) Nor does the Qur'ân at any place make a claim to an older and purer monotheism, as the orientalists suggest. No priority or superiority is claimed for the teachings of any of the Prophets. On the contrary, the equality and the same monotheism of all the Prophets including Ya'qûb, Mûsâ and 'Îsâ and the continuity of the teachings of all of them are emphasized all through. No distinction is made in respect of any of them. (e) Last but not least, it was also at Makka that clear departures were made from all the basic beliefs and practices of the Jews and the Christians. Therefore nothing could be farther from the truth than to say that Muḥammad (ﷺ) had recourse to the Abrahamic tradition and *al-ḥanîfiyyah* in order to break away from Juddaism and Christianity when, after his migration to Madina, he fell out with the Jews.

The last point deserves a little more careful attention. It is an established and well known pattern of historical development that whenever an individual or a group of individuals come up with a new scheme of reform or a new programme of action, the very first step they take is to explain the novelty and rationale of their scheme and how it differs from the existing pattern of ideas and practices. In fact the success of their scheme depends on this very initial step, particularly if the scheme relates to ideas and beliefs. If, therefore, the role Muḥammad (ﷺ) played had anything to do with his thought and preparation and with the usual process of historical development, it was only in the fitness of things that he should have explained at

the outset the distinctiveness of his ideas and their differences with the existing faiths and practices. Indeed the support he got and the opposition he met with prior to his migration to Madina can be explained only in terms of the novelty and distinctiveness of his mission. Contrary to this well-known historical process, contrary to reason and common sense and, above all, contrary to the evidence of the Qur'ân and the histories, the orienatlists would have us believe that Muḥammad (ﷺ) simply picked up bits of Judaism and Christianity, and that also from secondary sources, and then continued to preach them in the name of a new religion[1] till, after more than ten years of such preaching he came to Madina and fell out with the Jews, when he broke away from both Judaism and Christianity by tracing his doctrines to the teachings of a more ancient Prophet. It is surprising that such an absurd suggestion could at all have been seriously made. The Qur'ân, and therefore the Prophet, denounced the Trinity, the doctrine of the sonship of God, the divinity of 'Îsâ and such other beliefs of the People of the Book right from the beginning. At Madina the same onslaught on the same beliefs and notions was continued when reference was made to Ibrâhîm as a *ḥanîf* in reply to their claim of identity with him. The objection that the beliefs and practices alluded to constituted either conspicuous or constructive polytheism antithetical to Abrahamic monotheism was not met then, nor has it since then been done satisfactorily. Instead, it has been calimed that Muḥammad (ﷺ) derived his ideas and information from Judaism and Christianity, that he only broke away from the two systems when he came to Madina after 13 years of preaching as a Prophet, that *al-ḥanîfiyyah* and *ḥanîfs* spoken of by the Qur'ân and the histories are the product of his unresting mind or of the imagination of the historians, etc. Clearly these theories are in the nature of counter-blasts and apologies against the Qur'ânic onslaught on the beliefs and practices of the People of the Book.

1. The suggestion that the technical use of *Islâm* and *Muslim* was not made till after the migration to Madina, noticed earlier in this chapter, appears to be a manoeuvre to avoid this inherent absurdity of the theory.

SECTION IV
RECEIPT OF *WAḤY* AND INCEPTION OF THE MISSION

CHAPTER XVI

DIVINE COMMUNICATION (*WAḤY*) AND INCEPTION OF THE MISSION

1. THE RECEIPT OF DIVINE COMMUNICATION

There is no doubt that most of those who are described as *ḥanîfs* were the Prophet's contemporaries and that he had come in contact with some of them, at least those who were inhabitants of Makka and were from among his relatives and acquaintances such as Zayd ibn 'Amr ibn Nufayl, Waraqah ibn Nawfal and 'Ubayd Allah ibn Jaḥsh. The sources do not furnish any detail, however, about such contacts, nor do they give any clear indication of the mutual influence, if any, of one upon the other. But whatever the nature of such contact it is clear that the Prophet did not imitate any one of them in undertaking travels to distant lands like Syria in search of the true religion. On the contrary, all that is known about his disposition and activities for sometime prior to his call to prophethood is that he gradually began to love seclusion and engaged himself in solitary worship, contemplation and devotion at a cave on top of the mount Ḥirâ', some three miles east north-east of the Ka'ba (at present within the city limits). It was in the course of such solitary stay at the cave that he received one day God's communication (*waḥy*) through the angel Jibrîl. The most reliable account of this momentous event is that given by his wife, 'Â'ishah (r.a.), which is preserved in the collection of authentic (*ṣaḥîḥ*) reports made by Bukhârî. The report is transmitted by her nephew (sister's son) 'Urwah ibn al-Zubayr (d.94 H.), from him by Ibn Shihâb al-Zuhrî (d.124 H.), from him by 'Uqayl (d.144 H.), from him by Al-Layth (d.175 H.), from him by Yaḥyâ ibn Bukayr (d.231 H.) and from the last-mentioned by Bukhârî (d.256 H.). The report runs as follows:

"She ['Â'ishah (r.a.)] said: Divine communication to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah's blessings and peace be on him, started with good dreams (الرؤيا الصالحة)[1] in sleep. Thence he did not see any dream but that it came like the break of dawn. Thereafter (ثم) seclusion became dear to him. He used to go into seclusion (كان يخلو) at the cave of Ḥirâ' wherein he engaged himself in *al-taḥannuth* - that is prayer and submissiveness – تعبد [2] – consecutively for a number of nights before returning to his family and taking provisions for that (sort of stay there). Then he would come back

1. In another form of the report, "true dreams" (الرؤيا الصادقة).

2. The explanatory clause is that of Al-Zuhrî.

to Khadîjah and take provisions for similar stay till the truth came to him while he was in the cave of Ḥirâ'. The angel came to him and said: 'Read'. He replied: 'I am not one who reads' (ما أنا بقارئ). He [the Prophet] said: 'At this he [the angel] seized me and so pressed me that it became hard on me to bear it (حتى بلغ مني الجهد). Then he released me and said: 'Read'. I said: 'I am not one who reads'. Thereupon he seized me and pressed me for a second time till it became hard on me. Then he released me and said: 'Read'. I replied: 'I am not one who reads'. Thereupon he seized me and pressed me for the third time; then he released me and said: 'Read in the name of your Lord Who created; created man from *'alaq* (علق). Read; and your Lord is the Most Gracious.'[1] Then the Messenger of Allah, may Allah's blessings and peace be on him, returned with that (فرجع بها), his heart throbbing (with panic and bewilderment يرجف فؤاده). He went to Khadîjah bint Khuwaylid, may Allah be pleased with her, and said : 'Cover me, cover me.' So they covered him (and he remained so) till his panic was over. Then he spoke to Khadîjah and related to her the matter adding: 'I am apprehensive about myself (i.e. of some mishap occurring to me).'At this Khadîjah said: 'Never, by Allah, never will He disgrace you. You take care of your relatives, you bear the burdens of the weak, you extend pecuniary help to the poor and the destitute (وتكسب المعدوم), you entertain guests and help the victims of the vicissitudes of time.[2] Then she took him out with her and went to Waraqah ibn Nawfal ibn Asad ibn 'Abd al-'Uzzâ— son of Khadîjah's uncle. He was a person who had embraced Christianity in the *Jâhiliyyah* period and used to write Hebrew script and copy the *Injîl* in Hebrew as much as God willed him do so.[3] He was far advanced in age and had turned blind. Khadîjah said to him: O my cousin, listen to your brother's son.' So Waraqah said to him (the Prophet): 'O my nephew, tell me what you have to tell.' So the Messenger of Allah, may Allah's blessings and peace be on him, related to him what he had seen. Thereupon Waraqah said to him: 'This is the *Nâmûs* (i.e. the confidential angel Jibrîl) whom God had sent to Mûsâ. I wish I were young then! O, were it for me to remain alive when your people will drive you out!" At this the Messenger of Allah, may Allah's blessings and peace be on him, enquired: 'Will they drive me out? Waraqah said: 'Yes; no one had ever appeared with the like of what you have come with but had been the target of enmity. If your day finds me alive, I will assist you to the utmost of my capacity.' But it was not long before Waraqah died. And there was a pause in the coming of *waḥy*."[4]

1. These are the first three *'âyahs* of *sûrat al-'Alaq* (no. 96). In another form of the report the passage runs for two more *'âyahs*, i.e., up to "Taught man what he knew not."

2. In another form of this report there are a few additions to this description.

3. In another form of the report, "he used to write the *Injîl* in Arabic."

4. *Bukhârî*, no. 3. This report, or parts of it, sometimes with slight variations in words, also appear in other places of the work in connection with different topics. See for instance nos. 3392, 4953, 4955, 4956, 4957 and 6982.

It should be noted that this report consists not only of the statements of 'Â'ishah (r.a.) and Waraqah but the very words in which the Prophet described his experience at the cave, particularly his having been seized and pressed thrice by the angel. This is very significant; for the Prophet not only saw the entity that visited him, but very much felt him physically. And it is stated in the report that the entity was an angel. Apart from this, the report brings out a number of facts very clearly. In the first place, it says that there was a sort of twilight period preceding the receipt of the communication on the mount Ḥirâ'. During this initial period the Prophet used to see significant dreams *in sleep* which were as vivid and life-like as the morning day-light. Some reports say that this initial period lasted for about six months.[1] Some other reports have it also that during this period the Prophet, while walking in the streets of Makka, sometimes heard a voice calling him from above and when he looked up he noticed some figure appearing high up in the heaven or at the horizon and introducing himself as Jibrîl.[2]

Second, this initial period was followed by a period of solitary prayer and contemplation at the cave of Ḥirâ'. The expression *al-taḥannuth* (التحنث) used in this connection have been variously explained by the classical writers as well as by modern writers.[3] Whatever the exact meaning of the term, it clearly is a description, so far as this particular report is concerned, of the state in which the Prophet had placed himself pursuant to his love for seclusion which developed in him after the initial period of "good dreams". The further fact noted in the report, namely, his returning to his family from time to time to take provisions for his stay in the mountain cave, is only illustrative of this solitary stay and seclusion consecutively for several days and nights.

Third, it was in such solitary state in the cave that the angel appeared and delivered to him the text from God. The incident took place in the Prophet's wakefulness and full consciousness. This is evident not only from the vivid account of his experiences with the angel (that is his having been thrice seized and pressed) but also from the fact that this stage is distinguished in the report from the previous one of dreams *in sleep*.

Fourth, the text which he received and with which he came down from

1. See *Fatḥ al-Bârî*, I., 36.

2. Al-Bayhaqî, *Dalâ'il*, II., 143. See also below.

3. See for instance, M.J. Kister, "*Al-Taḥannuth*. An enquiry into the meaning of a term", *B.S.O.A.S.*, XXXI (1968), 233-236.

the mountain was not something which dawned on him as a result of his meditation and contemplation. It was a distinct text dictated to him from an external source. This fact is well worth emphasizing; for, whereas in the case of some other religious leaders like Gautama Buddha the "enlightenment" and spiritual state attained was a climax of such meditation and contemplation, in the case of the Prophet it is clearly stated that what he received was not at all a result of his mental, spiritual or intellectual exercises, but a text delivered to him by another entity. The text itself bears an eloquent testimony to this effect; for it speaks in no way of an attainment of elightenment. On the contrary it reminds man of his origin and exhorts the Prophet to read in the name of his Lord. Indeed, this very exhortation to read signifies that what he was being given was a text which he was required by God to read out. This internal evidence of the text is a decisive proof that it did not emanate from within the Prophet himself and this is further illustrated by the plain purport of the text. It clearly emphasizes the importance of reading, and therefore, of knowledge; and if communication of that simple message was the Prophet's objective, he could as well have done that without having recourse to solitude and with only a little thinking on his part.

Fifth, the Prophet's first reaction to the event was clearly that of a person who was not prepared for that type of incident and had never expected or anticipated it. That is why his immediate reaction was one of panic and bewilderment and apprehension about himself. This nature of his reaction is a further illustration of the fact that what he had received was from an external source and not a phenomenon of his own psychology. It is also a proof, as indicated earlier,[1] of the absence of any design or ambition on his part to emerge as a Prophet by some device or other. This conclusion is emphasized also by Khadîjah's reaction and further by both Khadîjah's and the Prophet's consulting Waraqah on the matter and the latter's reaction to the incident.

Last but not least, the account illustrates two other facts. One is the absence of any skill on the Prophet's part to read; for his spontaneous reply to the angel's asking him to read was: "I am not one who reads."[2] The other fact is that the text of the communication made to the Prophet presupposes his prior knowledge of and belief in the One Only God; for he was simply asked to read "in the name of your Lord" without introducing or explaining

1. *Supra*, pp. 233-240.

2. See also *supra*, pp. 179-181 & 241-250.

to him the nature and existence of his Lord. It is taken for granted that he knew Who his Lord was.

The report ends with the statement that there was a pause in the coming of *waḥy* after the first instalment delivered at Ḥirâ'. This was only natural; for the first incident must have stirred the Prophet to his very depth and clearly he needed a breathing time to recover from the first shock. At the same time he must have naturally become eager to have a second glimpse of the entity who had communicated the text at Ḥirâ' and thus be reassured of the reality of what he had experienced. As is natural in such a situation, when a person comes across some unusual sight or has an unexpected experience at any particular spot, he feels tempted to visit it again in the expectation that he might have a similar experience there again. It is therefore not at all surprising that the sources speak of his having somtimes frequented the mount Ḥirâ' and the neighbouring hills, undoubtedly in the hope of getting a second glimpse of the angel. And indeed he did have a second glimpse of the angel not long after the first encounter at Ḥirâ'. This second experience on his part is thus reported by Al-Zuhrî as follows:

He says: "'Abû Salamah ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmân has informed me that Jâbir ibn 'Abd Allah al-Anṣârî related, speaking about the pause in the coming of *waḥy*, that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah's blessings and peace be on him, said: 'While I was walking I heard a voice in the sky. I raised my eyes and lo! there was the angel who had come to me at Ḥirâ' sitting on a chair between the sky and the earth. I was frightened at that and returned (to my family) and said to them: 'Cover me'. Then Allah sent down on me: 'O wrapped up in the mantle, rise and warn' up to 'and the abomination, shun it.'[1] After that *waḥy* continued coming regularly and uninterruptedly."[2]

In one of the places where Bukhârî repeats the report about the coming of the first *waḥy* at mount Ḥirâ', i.e., in his chapter on "Interpretation of dreams" (*Ta'bîr*), he has an addition to the report of 'Â'ishah (r.a.) noticed above. At this place he also gives two chains of narrators subsequent to Al-Zuhrî, namely, (a) Yaḥyâ ibn Bukayr ← Al-Layth ← 'Uqayl ← Al-Zuhrî and (b) 'Abd Allah ibn Muḥammad ← 'Abd al-Razzâq ← Ma'mar ← Al-Zuhrî. The addition runs as follows:

"And then there was a pause in the coming of *waḥy* for such a period that the Prophet, may Allah's blessings and peace be on him, as we have come to know

1. *Sûrah* 74, *'âyahs* 1-5.
2. *Bukhârî*, no. 4. The report is repeated in the chapter on *Tafsîr* (no. 4954).

(فيما بلغنا) became so sad that he went on a number of times (مرارا) to throw himself down from the hill-tops. Thus whenever he went up to the top of a hill to throw himself down, Jibrîl appeared before him and said: 'O Muḥammad, you are truly Allah's Messenger." At this the Prophet's mind would be set at rest and he would be reassured; but when again the pause prolonged he similarly went and as he reached the top of a hill Jibrîl appeared before him and spoke to him similarly."[1]

This story of extreme frustration on the Prophet's part on account of the pause in the coming of *waḥy* and, in consequence, of his alleged suicide attempts, is not at all worthy of credence. As Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalânî points out, the story is only an addition and surmise on Al-Zuhrî's part and no statement of the Prophet himself, nor of 'Â'ishah (r.a.), nor even of 'Urwah ibn al-Zubayr.[2] This addition has been so mixed up with the text that it appears to be part of the original narration. That it is Al-Zuhrî's addition is very clear from his qualifying clause, "as we have come to know", with which he introduces this section. Had it been the Prophet's or 'Â'ishah's (r.a.) statement, there would have been no need to add this expression, for the chain of narrators had already been given at the beginning of the narration.

The second technical defect in the story has been pointed out by Muḥammad Nâṣir al-Dîn al-Albânî. He states that it is a *shâdh* (شـــاذ strange or odd) report in that it has come down only once through a chain of narrators subsequent to Al-Zuhrî among whom there is Ma'mar, and that in all other forms in which the matter is reported, even though Ma'mar is mentioned as one of the narrators, this addition does not occur. Nor is this addition found anywhere else with an uninterrupted chain of narrators worthy to be cited as evidence.[3]

Apart from these technical considerations, the Prophet's character and personality do not admit of such a conduct on his part. The story is all the more unworthy of credence because it speaks not of one such alleged suicide attempt but of several such attempts; as if the assurance given by Jibrîl for the second time (i.e. after the first appearance at the cave of Ḥirâ') would not have satisfied the Prophet! The story might have originated, as one scholar points out, in someone's seeing the Prophet frequenting the hills, as he natu-

1. *Bukhârî*, no. 6982.

2. *Fatḥ al-Bârî*, XII, 376. Ibn Ḥajar's words are: (من بلاغات الزهري وليس موصولا)

3. Muḥammad Nâṣir al-Dîn al-Albânî, *Difâ' 'an al-Ḥadîth al-Nabawiyyah wa al-Sîrah*, Damascus (1388 H.), 40-42.

rally did during the pause in the coming of *waḥy*, and then supposing on the basis of that sight that the Prophet was about to throw himself down from the top of the hill![1] And once such a surmise was circulated it easily found its place in subsequent reports with further mixing up of the facts and circumstances.[2]

The surmise of the Prophet's suicide attempts is thus totally groundless; but it is a fact that he had a second glimpse of the angel shortly after his receipt of *waḥy* at mount Ḥirâ'. This fact is stated clearly in the Qur'ân as follows:

(a) ﴿ ولقد رءاه بالأفق المبين ﴾ (٨١: ٢٣)

"And he had indeed seen him (Jibrîl) in the clear horizon."(81: 23)[3]

(b) ﴿ علّمه شديد القوىٰ * ذو مرّة فاستوىٰ * وهو بالأفق الأعلىٰ * ثم دنا فتدلىٰ * فكان قاب قوسين أو أدنىٰ ... ﴾ (٥٣: ٥-٩)

"He was taught by the one mighty in power, endued with wisdom; he appeared in a stately form, while he was in the highest part of the horizon. Then he approached and came closer; and was at a distance of but two bowlengths or even nearer..." (53:5-9)[4]

Before proceeding further with the story it would be worthwhile to take into account some other reports concerning the receipt of the first divine communication by the Prophet, especialy those given by Ibn Isḥâq, Ibn Sa'd (i.e. of Al-Wâqidî) and Al-Ṭabarî.

II. THE REPORTS GIVEN BY IBN ISḤÂQ

Speaking on the subject Ibn Isḥâq first reproduces part of 'Â'ishah's (r.a.) report as given in *Bukhârî* and as quoted above, saying that at first the Prophet used to see good dreams in sleep which appeared like morning day-light; then seclusion became dear to him so that nothing was dearer to him than to be alone.[5] At this point Ibn Isḥâq leaves the report and inserts another report which he says his informants received from "men of learning". It mentions some unusual incidents like the trees' and stones' saluting the Prophet-

1. Muḥammad Muḥammad 'Abû Shahbah, *Al-Sîrat al-Nabawiyyah Fî Ḍaw' al-Qur'ân wa al-Sunnah*, I, Damascus, 1409 / 1988, p. 266.

2. See *Musnad*, II, 232-233; 'Abû Nu'a'ym, *Dalâ'il*, 68-69; Al-Bayḥaqî, *Dalâ'il*, I., 393-395.

3. See Ibn Kathîr, *Tafsîr*, VIII, 361-362.

4. See *ibid*, VII, 419-422.

5. Ibn Hishâm, I, 234.

to-be, etc.[1] Then Ibn Isḥâq resumes the story of the coming of *waḥy* on the basis of another report which he got from Wahb-ibn Kaysân (d. 127 H.) who, it is said, heard 'Abd Allah ibn al-Zubayr asking 'Ubayd ibn 'Umayr ibn Qatâdah al-Lythî[2] (d. 68. H.) on the subject whereupon he ('Ubayd) stated as follows:

"The Messenger of Allah, may Allah's blessings and peace be on him, used to retire (يجاور) at Ḥirâ' every year for a month, as was the wont of the Quraysh to engage themselves in *taḥannuth* for such a period during the Days of *Jâhiliyyah*...[3] So the Messenger of Allah, may Allah's blessings and peace be on him, used to retire there for that month every year, feeding the poor who repaired to him. When the Messenger of Allah, may Allah's blessings and peace be on him, finished that month-long retirement, the first thing he did before going home, was to go to the Ka'ba and circumambulate it seven times, or as many times as Allah wished him to do. Then he would return to his home. This practice he continued to follow till the month in which Allah willed to honour him, of the year in which He called him to prophethood, and that was the month of Ramaḍân. So the Messenger of Allah, may Allah's blessings and peace be on him, went out to Ḥirâ', as he used to do, and his family was with him, till the night arrived in which Allah honoured him with His message and blessed His servants (mankind) thereby. There came to him Jibrîl, may Allah's peace be on him, by Allah's command. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah's blessings and peace be on him, said: Jibrîl came to me, while I was asleep, with a silken casket in which there was a writing, and said to me: 'Read.' (The Prophet said) I replied: 'I do not read'. (The Prophet said) Thereupon he pressed me so hard that I thought I would die. Then he released me and said: 'Read'. (The Prophet said) I replied: 'I do no read.' (The Prophet said) Thereupon he pressed me so hard that I thought I would die. Then he released me and said: Read'. (The Prophet said) I said: 'What shall I read?' (The Prophet said) Thereupon he pressed me so hard that I thought I would die. Then he released me and said: 'Read'. (The Prophet said) I said: 'What shall I read?' I did not say so except to avoid his doing the same to me as he had done. Then he said: 'Read in the name of thy Lord Who created; created man from *'alaq*. Read, and your Lord is the Most Gracious; Who taught by means of the pen; taught man what he knew not.' The Prophet said: 'So I read it.' Then it ended and he left me and I woke up from my sleep; and it was as if a writ was written on my heart. (The Prophet said) Thereafter I came out (of the cave) till I was in the mid-

1. *Ibid*, 234-235.

2. He was a *tâbi'î*. See *Tahdhîb al-Tahdhîb*, VII, 71 (no. 148); *Taqrîb al-Tahdhîb*, I, 544, no. 1561.

3. Ibn Isḥâq interposes here a couplet of 'Abû Ṭâlib's concerning *al-taḥannuth* which is followed by Ibn Hishâm's explanation of the word. *Ibid.*, 235-236.

dle of the hill when I heard a voice from the sky saying: 'O Muḥammad, you are the Messenger of Allah, and I am Jibrîl. (The Prophet said) I raised my head looking towards the sky and lo! there was Jibrîl clearly in the shape of a man with his two feet spread in the horizon saying: 'O Muḥammad, you are Allah's Messenger, and I am Jibrîl. (The Prophet said) Thereupon I stood looking at him, and I moved neither forward nor backward. I started turning my face from him in the horizon, but in whatever direction of the horizon I looked I saw him in the same position. I remained standing without moving forward or backward till Khadîjah sent her men in search of me. They reached Upper Makka and returned to her while I was still standing in that place of mine. Then he (Jibrîl) left me."

"I left the place, returning to my family till I came to Khadîjah and sat touching her thigh and leaning towards her. She said: 'O 'Abû al-Qâsim, where had you been? By Allah I sent my people in search of you till they reached Upper Makka and then returned to me. Then I narrated to her what I had seen. Thereupon she said: 'Rest assured, O son of my uncle. By Him in Whose hand is Khadîjah's life, I hope you will become the Prophet of these people."

"Then she stood up, put her dress on, and went out to Waraqah ibn Nawfal ibn Asad ibn 'Abd al-'Uzzâ ibn Quṣayy. He was her uncle's son, and had become a Christian, read the Book (Gospels) and had heard from the scholars of the *Torah* and the *Injîl*. She informed him of what the Messenger of Allah, may Allah's blessings and peace be on him, had related to her regarding what he had seen and heard. Thereupon Waraqah ibn Nawfal said: 'Holy, Holy. By Him in Whose hands is the life of Waraqah, if you have spoken the truth, O Khadîjah, then indeed the Great Nâmûs (Jibrîl) who came to Mûsâ, has come to him (the Prophet); verily he is the Prophet of these people. So tell him to rest assured." Then Khadîjah returned to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah's blessings and peace be on him, and told him what Waraqah ibn Nawfal had said. Then when the Messenger of Allah, may Allah's blessings and peace be on him, ended his retired state (جوار) and left the place, he did what he used to do, beginning with the Ka'ba and circumambulating it. There Waraqah ibn Nawfal, who was also circumambulating it, met him (the Prophet) and said: 'O my brother's son, tell me what you have seen and heard.' So the Messenger of Allah, may Allah's blessings and peace be on him, informed him of everything. Thereupon Waraqah said to him: 'By Him in Whose hands is my life, you are indeed the Prophet of these people, and the Great Nâmûs, who came to Mûsâ, has come to you. You will not be believed, you will be put to trouble and you will be driven out and fought with. If I live till that day I will surely help the cause of Allah as He knows.' Then Waraqah leaned his head towards him (the Prophet) and kissed the middle of his head. Then the Messenger of Allah, may Allah's blessings and peace be on him, went to his house."[1]

1. Ibn Hishâm, I., 234-237.

It is obvious that this report differs in many respects from that of 'Â'ishah (r.a.) given in *Bukhârî* and noted earlier. The differences consist in omissions of, additions to and modification of the facts mentioned by the latter. As regards omissions, this report given by Ibn Isḥâq does not mention any initial period of good or true dreams preceding the Prophet's engaging himself in *taḥannuth* at the cave of Ḥirâ'. Secondly, there is also no indication of panic or bewilderment on the Prophet's part in consequence of his encounters and experiences with Jibrîl. Lastly, there is no mention in this report of any pause in the coming of *waḥy* after the receipt of the first instalment at the cave of Ḥirâ'.

As regards additions, the first noticeable thing is that this report says that the Prophet's sojourn in the cave of Ḥirâ' was in accordance with the tradition of Quraysh's doing similar *taḥannuth* every year during the month of Ramaḍân. It further says that the Prophet also did so every year. Secondly, it says that while the Prophet was coming down from the cave and was still in the middle of the hill the angel Jibrîl appeared again in the sky, called the Prophet by his name and assured him that he was indeed Allah's Messenger. Thirdly, it says that on his return from the hill the first thing the Prophet did was going to the Ka'ba and circumambulating it. Lastly, it says that in addition to Khadijah's meeting Waraqah, the latter met the Prophet at the Ka'ba compound and expressed similar views about him as were earlier expressed to Khadîjah (r.a.).

More remarkable, however, are the modifications that appear in this report in the facts stated in 'Â'ishah's (r.a.) report. In the first place, it is stated that the Prophet took his family with him when he went to Ḥirâ' for *taḥannuth*. Secondly and more importantly, it is said that the angel Jibrîl came and delivered the text to the Prophet while he was asleep in the cave of Ḥirâ'. It is further stated that the angel pressed him four times, instead of the three in the other report; and that twice the Prophet said that he did not know reading and twice he asked what he should read. Thirdly, this report makes Khadîjah (r.a.) go alone to Waraqah to seek his opinion about her husband, leaving him behind.

It should be noted that the ultimate authority of this report is 'Ubayd ibn 'Umayr ibn Qatâdah who is a *tâbi'î* and who does not mention the source of his information. The report is thus technically *mursal*, that is, going back only to the second generation after the Prophet. It is a recognized principle of

interpretation that if a *mursal* report differs from one that goes back with reliable and uninterrupted *isnâd* to the Prophet (*mawṣûl, marfû'*), the latter prevails over the former. Hence that part of 'Ubayd ibn 'Umayr's report produced by Ibn Isḥâq which is at variance with the report given in *Bukhârî* must yield place to the latter. In any case the statement that the Prophet received the revelation at the cave of Ḥirâ' while he was asleep, that is in a state of dreaming, is unacceptable in view of the clear statement in 'Â'ishah's (r.a.) report that it happened in the Prophet's wakefulness and full consciousness. Some commentators have of course attempted to reconcile the two statements by saying that the text of the revelation was first received in dream and then again in wakefulness. This explanation, though somewhat in line with the fact of a period of good dreams preceding the coming of revelation at Ḥirâ', ignores the fact that 'Ubayd ibn 'Umayr makes this dream happen at the cave of Ḥirâ' itself.

In fact the report under consideration appears to have mixed up the fact of the initial period of good dreams with the second stage of solitary prayer and contemplation (*taḥannuth*) and the receipt of the first text of revelation at Ḥirâ' in the state of the Prophet's wakefulness and full consciousness. This mixing up is all the more obvious from another aspect of the report which makes the Prophet see Jibrîl in the sky immediately after having come out of the cave after his alleged dream and while still in the middle of the mountain, and not after a pause in the coming of *waḥy* as narrated in some other reports.[1] Also, it does not appear to be correct that the Quraysh used to engage themselves in *taḥannuth* each year for the month of Ramaḍân and that the Prophet betook himself to the cave of Ḥirâ' in imitation of that custom. Again, the statement that he took his family there is inconsistent with the concept of seclusion and solitary prayer which was the sole objective of *taḥannuth*. It is also inconsistent with the other statement that Khadîjah (r.a.) sent her men in search of the Prophet as he stood in the middle of the mountain gazing at Jibrîl in the sky. The account gives the impression that while the Prophet was staying in the cave, his family was staying at another spot at the mountain, a situation which is warranted neither by the extent and shape of the mountain nor by the purpose, if at all, of dragging them out to the bleak mountains. Even then it is quite unlikely that Khadîjah, if she had at all gone to the mountain, would have been unaware of the Prophet's whereabouts. Clearly there is here a mixing up of an incident which took place on

1. See below, text.

another occasion, most probably when the Prophet used to go to the mountain during the *pause* in the coming of *waḥy*.

Despite these anomalies and confusions in the report, it corroborates in general the solid core of facts given in 'Â'ishah's (r.a.) report, namely, (a) that the Prophet received the first text of the revelation at Ḥirâ' from the angel Jibrîl; (b) that at a subsequent stage the Prophet saw the angel appearing in the sky, introducing himself as Jibrîl and assuring Muḥammad (ﷺ) that he was indeed God's Messenger; and (c) that Waraqah ibn Nawfal, when he heard the account of the incident at Ḥirâ', expressed his view that it was the very angel (Nâmûs) who used to come to Mûsâ with God's revelation and that Muḥammad (ﷺ) had received such a commission from God.

III. THE REPORTS GIVEN BY AL-WÂQIDÎ

The next account in point of time is that of Al-Wâqidî (Muḥammad ibn 'Umar, 120-207 H.) coming through his scribe Muḥammad ibn Sa'd (168-230 H.).

(1) Al-Wâqidî first quotes the initial part of 'Â'ishah's (r.a.) report as given in *Bukhârî* but through a different *isnâd*, namely, through Ma'mar ibn Râshid and Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allah. In effect, however, this part of the report is the same as that in *Bukhârî*, saying that the Prophet first used to see good (or true) dreams for sometime, after which seclusion became dear to him so that nothing was dearer to him than that, that he next retired to the cave of Ḥirâ' for engaging himself in *taḥannuth* consecutively for several days and coming back to his family from time to time to take provisions for that sort of stay on the mountain, till "the truth" came to him.[1]

(2) At this point Al-Wâqidî introduces another report which he received through Ibrâhîm ibn Ismâ'îl, from Dâ'ûd ibn al-Ḥusayn, from 'Ikrima, from Ibn 'Abbâs. It is said that Ibn 'Abbâs stated that when the Prophet was in that state (i.e., presumably, after the receipt of 'the truth' الحق) at Ajyad he saw an angel sitting cross-legged in the sky at the horizon, calling him (the Prophet) by name and introducing himself as Jibrîl. At this sight the Prophet was terrified and started looking in other directions of the sky, but to whatever direction he turned his eyes he saw the angel. Hence the Prophet hurried back home, went to Khadîjah (r.a.) and expressed his fear that he might turn a soothsayer though he detested it the most. She comforted him by mentioning the qualities of his head and heart. Then she went to Waraqah and

1. Ibn Sa'd, I, 194.

related to him the story. The latter said that it was the Great Nâmûs who had appeared to her husband and that it indicated the beginning of his prophethood, adding that he should not therefore think anything but good for himself.[1]

(3) Al-Wâqidî next produces two other reports, one after another, received through different chains of narrators and both saying that the Prophet sometimes saw light and heard sounds and expressed his fears to his wife saying that he would probably turn a soothsayer. Khadîjah (r.a.) would comfort him by mentioning his noble qualities. One of these reports says that the Prophet also expressed his fears that he might even go mad and that at this Khadîjah (r.a.) went to Waraqah who opined that it was the Nâmûs who had appeared to her husband, that he would be a Prophet and that Waraqah would help him if he lived till that time.[2]

(4) Next Al-Wâqidî reproduces three different reports form three different sources. Two of these reports say that the first thing which was revealed to the Prophet was the five initial *'âyahs* of *sûrat al-'Alaq*. Al-Wâqidî notes that this happened on "the day of Ḥirâ'".[3] The third report was received from Dâ'ûd ibn al-Ḥusayn who had it from Ghaṭfân ibn Ṭarîf who, in his turn, had it from Ibn 'Abbâs. It says that after the revelation which came at Ḥirâ' the Prophet did not see Jibrîl for "several days". Hence he became sad and started frequenting the Thabîr and Ḥirâ' mountains in order to throw himself from them. Once while he was thus going to one of those mountains he heard a voice from the sky and as he turned his eyes upwards he saw Jibrîl sitting crosslegged on a chair and calling him and saying "O Muḥammad, you are truly Allah's Messenger, and I am Jibrîl." The Prophet then left the place, his mind set at rest. Thereafter *waḥy* came regularly and without interruption.[4]

Now, the authorities' rating of Al-Wâqidî's credibility is very low; but apart from that question, the points illustrated by the reports produced by him may be tabulated as follows. In the first place, it is stated that there was an initial period of "true" dreams which was followed by the Prophet's love for solitary retirement. Second, it is stated that the Prophet used to retire at the cave of Ḥirâ' where he remained consecutively for several days before

1. *Ibid*, 194-195.
2. *Ibid.*, 195.
3. *Ibid.*, 196.
4. *Ibid.*

returning to his family to take provisions for the purpose. There is no mention in these reports that such *taḥannuth* on the Prophet's part was in imitation of the custom of the Quraysh; nor is there any suggestion that the Prophet's family went with him to the hills. Third, it is clearly stated that it was at the cave of Ḥirâ' that the first revelation was received and that it consisted of the first five *'âyahs* of *sûrat al-'Alaq*. The details of how the angel appeared and delivered the text are not mentioned. At the same time there is no indication whatsoever that the incident took place while the Prophet was asleep (i.e. in dream). Fourth, as regards the seeing of the angel Jibrîl in the horizon one of Al-Wâqidî's reports says that this happened at Ajyad, while another of his reports says that this happened when the Prophet frequented the Thabîr and Ḥirâ' mountains in consequence of the angel's not appearing to him for "several days" after the first revelation. This information corroborates the fact of a pause in the coming of *waḥy*. Fifth, as regards the alleged intention on the Prophet's part to throw himself from the mountain tops, it appears unmistakably that it is only a guess on the narrator's part, in this instance on the part of either Ibn 'Abbâs or some other narrator subsequent to him. Sixth, as regards the consultation with Waraqah one of Al-Wâqidî's reports makes the event happen after the seeing of the angel reportedly at Ajyad; while the other report makes it happen after the Prophet had sometimes seen light and heard sounds, etc. Excepting these two last mentioned points (fifth and sixth), thus, the facts presented by Al-Wâqidî are in accord with those given in 'Â'ishah's (r.a.) report and recorded in *Bukhârî*.

IV. AL-ṬABARÎ'S ACCOUNT

Writing more than a hundred years after Al-Wâqidî, Al-Ṭabarî (224-310 H.) reproduces Ibn Isḥâq's report, as mentioned above, with minor alterations in wording and slight omissions and additions in the text, but otherwise mentioning him by name and keeping as close to his text as possible.[1] Before reproducing his version of Ibn Isḥâq's report, however, Al-Ṭabarî puts in another report of the event which he says he received from Aḥmad ibn 'Uthmân ('Abû Jawrâ,) who had it from Wahb ibn Jarîr, who, from his father (i.e. Jarîr), the latter from Al-Nu'mân ibn Râshid, he from Al-Zuhrî, from 'Urwah, from 'Â'ishah (r.a.). This report is distinguished from that given in Ibn Isḥâq by the fact that whereas the latter's report goes back, as noted above, only to 'Ubayd ibn 'Umayr and is as such *mursal*, Al-Ṭabarî's report

1. Al-Ṭabarî, *Târîkh*, II, 300-302 (I / 1149-1153).

goes back to 'Â'ishah (r.a.) through Al-Zuhrî and 'Urwah. The salient features of this report are as follows:

(a) In the first part of the report the facts are exactly the same as they are related in the report in *Bukhârî*, namely, the initial period of "true" or "good" dreams, followed by the Prophet's love for seclusion, his solitary prayer and stay at the cave of Ḥirâ' consecutively for a number of days, his returning to his family from time to time to take provisions for a similar stay, till the "truth" came to him. From this point the report differs from that in *Bukhârî* and runs as follows:

The Prophet is said to have related:

(b) "So he [the angel] came to me and said: 'O Muḥammad, you are the Messenger of Allah.' The Messenger of Allah, may Allah's blessings and peace be on him, said: 'At this I fell on my knees, though I was standing. Then I returned (to my family), my heart throbbing. Then I went to Khadîjah and said to her: 'Cover me, cover me.' (I remained so) till my panic went away. Then he [the angel] came to me and said: 'O Muḥammad, You are Allah's Messenger.' The Prophet said: 'At this I thought of throwing myself from the top of a mountain, and when I intended doing so he appeared before me and said: 'O Muḥammad, I am Jibrîl, and you are Allah's Messenger.' Then he said: "Read in the name of your Lord Who created.' So I read. Then I came to Khadîjah and said: 'I am afraid about my life. She said..."

(c) From this point the account is again the same as in *Bukhârî*, i.e., Khadîjah's words of consolation to the Prophet, their going to Waraqah, the latter's opinion that the angel Jibrîl (Nâmûs) had come with God's revelation, that the Prophet's people would turn against him, etc., ending with Waraqah's remarks that if he lived till that day he would render all possible help to the Prophet.

This report, though it traces its origin to 'Â'ishah (r.a.) through Al-Zuhrî and 'Urwah, differs from that in *Bukhârî* in the following essential respects:

(1) It says that the first thing the angel told the Prophet in the cave was that he was Allah's Messenger.

(2) That after the Prophet had come home from the cave the angel appeared again and told him that he was Allah's Messenger.

(3) That after this second appearance of the angel and also after the Prophet had been told for the second time that he was Allah's Messenger, he contemplated throwing himself from a hill-top.

(4) That when he was about to so throw himself from a hill-top the angel

appeared for the third time, introduced himself as Jibrîl, assured the Prophet that he was Allah's Messenger and delivered to him the first *'âyah* of *sûrat al-'Alaq*.

(5) There is no mention of the Prophet's first expressing his inability to read.

(6) There is also no mention about the pause in the coming of *waḥy*.

Now, it is obvious that neither 'Â'ishah (r.a.) nor, for that matter, Al-Zuhrî, could have given two essentially different accounts of the same event. If the facts stated here were true but were somehow omitted or skipped over by them the narrators subsequent to them should have mentioned the sources of their information. But nothing of the sort is indicated here or elsewhere. Even with regard to the alleged suicide attempt which finds mention in ***Bukhârî*** as Al-Zuhrî's surmise, it is given here in a quite different form. Thus while Al-Zhurî would have it that the Prophet allegedly intended to throw himself from a hill-top because of the pause in the coming of *waḥy* and only desisted from doing so when the angel Jibrîl reappeared and assured him that he was Allah's Messenger; the present report, on the other hand, not only does not make any mention of the pause in the coming of *waḥy* but also would have us believe that the Prophet meditated suicide because the angel Jibrîl appeared for the second time and also assured the Prophet for the second time that he was Allah's Messenger. Apart from the utter unreasonableness of the statement, it is obvious that Al-Zuhrî himself could not have given such divergent and diametrically opposite accounts about the cause and sequence of the event.

It is thus clear that the narrators subsequent to Al-Zuhrî or at least some of them through whom the account reached Al-Ṭabarî mixed up not only Al-Zuhrî's own statement but also the original report with other matters. In fact authoritative opinions are not quite at one about some of these narrators. For instance Nu'mân ibn Râshid, who is stated to have received the report from Al-Zuhrî, is regarded by a number of competent authorities as "very weak", "confused", profuse in making mistakes and even baseless surmises. It is even stated that he made reprehensible and worthless reports and should therefore be avoided.[1] Similarly Jarîr (ibn Ḥâzîm ibn 'Abd Allah ibn Shujâ'

1. Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalânî, *Tahdhîb al-Tahdhîb*, X, Hyderabad, 1227 H., p. 152, no. 819. Part of the criticism uns as follows: قال علي بن المديني ذكره يحيى القطان فضعفه جدا وقال عبد الله بن أحمد سألت أبي عنه فقال مضطرب الحديث ، وروى أحاديث مناكير وقال ابن معين ضعيف وقال مرة ليس بشيء وقال البخاري وأبو حاتم في حديثه وهم كثير . . .

al-Azdî), who is stated to have received the report from Al-Nu'mân ibn Râshid, is considered to be profuse in errors, mixing up his surmises with the reports he transmitted, changing the sequence of events and even making reprehensible reports.[1] Also his son Wahb, who received the report under reference from him, used to commit mistakes. He is even stated to have attributed his reports to persons from whom he had not received them. Thus he transmitted about four thousand reports "form Shu'ba", but those were really reports of 'Abd al-Raḥmân al-Raṣṣâsî.[2]

Obviously, reports coming through such narrators need to be taken with caution and cannot be, according to the accepted rules of interpretation, given precedence over those on the same subject emanating from narrators of unimpeachable veracity.

It is not necessary to follow the accounts found in works later than Al-Ṭabarî's; for they do not really add anything new or authentic to the story. On the whole the most authentic account of the coming of the first revelation to the Prophet is that given by 'Â'ishah (r.a.) and contained in *Bukhârî*. This report and the other reports noticed above, excluding the points on which they disagree, bring out the following facts:

(i) That on the eve of his call the Prophet experienced an initial period of "good" dreams which appeared to him like the morning day-light.

(ii) That after this he began to love seclusion and spent a period of time in solitary prayer and contemplation at the cave on top of Mount Ḥirâ'.

(iii) That it was at the cave of Ḥirâ' that the angel Jibrîl appeared to him and delivered to him the first text of the revelation.

(iv) That shortly after this first encounter at the cave of Ḥirâ' the Prophet saw Jabrîl again in the sky, addressing him by name, disclosing his own identity and confirming that he (the Prophet) was Allah's Messenger.

(v) That what the Prophet received was something extraneous to him. It was a distinct text received from an external source, and not the result of his own contemplation and thinking. The experinece at Ḥirâ' was also no psychological phenomenon for him.

(vi) That the immediate reaction of the Prophet to the receipt of Divine communication was that of a person who never expected such a deve-

1. *Ibid.*, II, 71-72, No. 111.
2. *Ibid.*, XI, 161-162, No. 273.

lopment, that initially he was not quite sure of his new status and that it was only after the reassurance given by the angel Jibrîl (under Divine direction) and after consultation with Waraqah ibn Nawfal that his (the Prophet's) mind was set at rest;

(vii) That therefore previous to his receipt of the Divine communication the Prophet did not plan and design to play the role of a Prophet; and

(viii) That there was a short pause in the coming of revelation after the receipt of the first text at Ḥirâ'. This was in the nature of a breathing time enabling the Prophet to recover from the first shock of the extraordinary experience.

V. DATE OF THE FIRST REVELATION

The authorities generally agree in saying that the Prophet had completed the fortieth year of his life when he received the first divine communication at Mount Ḥirâ'.[1] An indirect allusion to this fact might be found, as one scholar suggests,[2] in the Qur'ânic statement at 46: 15 which indicates the age of forty to be the time when a servant willed to be grateful to Allah for His favours. It is said that the Prophet was born in the month of Rabî' I. Calculating on that basis his foriteth year would be completed in that very month of the year. And if the initial period of "good" or "true" dreams commenced on the completion of his fortieth year and if the period of *taḥannuth* at the cave of Hirâ' is taken into account, it should be clear that the receipt of the first divine communication took place a few months after the completion of the fortieth year.[3] That fits in well with the Qur'ânic statement that the Qur'ân was sent down in the month of Ramaḍân (i.e. the sixth month after Rabî'I). The passage runs as follows:

﴿ شهر رمضان الذى أنزل فيه القرءان هدًى للناس وبيّنـٰت من الهدىٰ والفرقان... ﴾ (٢ : ١٨٥)

"The month of Ramaḍân is that in which the Qur'ân was sent down as guidance to mankind and as clear proofs of the guidance and the Criterion." (2: 185).

1. Ibn Hishâm, I. 233; Ibn Sa'd, I, 190, 194; Al-Ṭabarî, *Târîkh*, II, 290-292 (I / 1139-1141). Al-Ṭabarî of course gives three reports (in fact two, for two of the reports emanate from the same person, Sa'îd ibn Musayyib) saying that revelation came to the Prophet when he was forty-three years old (Al-Ṭabarî, *Târîkh, op.cit.*, 292). These reports, however, are not quite correct and they appear to trace the event from the time of the Prophet's public preaching and conflict with the Quraysh.

2. Muḥammad 'Izzat Darwazah, *Sîrat al-Rasûl*, I, Beirut, n.d. (1400 H.?), pp. 129-130.

3. See *Fatḥ al-Bârî*, I, 36; Al-Bayḥaqî, *Dalâ'il*, II, 143.

Some scholars of course interpret the particle *fî* (في) in this passage in the sense of "about" and say that the meaning of the *'âyah* is that the Qur'ân has been revealed about Ramaḍân (and fasting during it).[1] It may be noted that while the particle in question is sometimes used in the sense of "about" or "concerning", this sense would be very remote and out of context here. For the *'âyah* speaks of the Qur'ân as guidance for mankind, etc., thereby showing that the whole burden of the statement is on the Qur'ân and not on the month of Ramaḍân as such. Also, such a construction would not be in consonance with the relative importance of such other subjects as *tawḥîd*, *ṣalât*, and *zakâh* dealt with the Qur'ân. In fact if any single subject should be identified about which the Qur'ân may be said to have been revealed, it should be *tawḥîd*; for the whole of the Qur'ân relates in some form or other to this subject. Also *ṣalât* and *zakâh* are more frequently and more emphatically enjoined in the Qur'ân. Yet, nowhere in it do we find any mention that it has been revealed about any of these subjects. It would thus be inconsistent with both the context of the *'âyah* as well as the over-all subject matter of the Qur'ân to interpret the *'âyah* in question as saying that the Qur'ân has been revealed about Ramaḍân.[2]

It is, however, not only the above mentioned passage but two other passages of the Qur'ân which specifically refer to its having been revealed in the month of Ramaḍân and also indicate the approximate part of the month. The two passages are as follows:

(١) ﴿حمٓ * والكتـب المبين * إنا أنزلنـه في ليلة مبـركة...﴾ (٤٤ : ١ ٣)

"Ḥâ-Mîm. By the Book that makes things clear. We have indeed sent it down during a blessed night..." (44:1-3)

(٢) ﴿إنا أنزلنـه في ليلة القدر﴾ (٩٧ : ١)

"We have indeed sent it (the Qur'ân) down in the Night of Power." (97:1).

These two passages, especially the first, clearly refer to the revelation of the Qur'ân; for the *'âyah* immediately preceding it (i.e. 44:2) specifically speaks about "the Book". Also, the obvious implication of both the passages quoted above is the beginning of the Qur'ânic revelation; for it is well-known that the whole of the Qur'ân was revealed to the Prophet in instal-

1. See Al-Bayḍâwî, *Tafsîr*, I, 105. See for discussion Akram Khan, *op. cit*, pp. 311-313.

2. This remote meaning is adopted by those who think that revelation came to the Prophet immediately on completion of the fortieth year of his life, in Rabî' I (8th day) and not in the month of Ramaḍân. Such a view, however, is contrary to the clear text of the Qur'ân.

ments over a span of 23 years. It should also be noted that the terms Qur'ân and *Kitâb* have been used throughout in the Qur'ân to mean the whole as well as part of it.

It is thus clear that the first Qur'ânic revelation came to the Prophet during the month of Ramaḍân, more specifically in the "Night of Power" or the "Blessed Night".[1] There are a number of reports saying that this night is one of the nights during the last ten days of Ramaḍân.[2] One report mentions specifically that the first Qur'ânic revelation came to the Prophet in the night of 21 Ramaḍân.[3] Also a number of other reports have it that the Prophet said he was born on a Monday and received the first revelation on a Monday.[4] A recent calculation shows that the first Monday after 20 Ramaḍân in the 41st year of the Prophet's life falls on 21 Ramaḍân. It may therefore be said that the first revelation on Mount Ḥirâ' came in the night of 21 Ramaḍân during the 41st year of the Prophet's life (610- 611 C.E.).

Reference should be made in this connection, however, to three reports which mention, respectively, 17, 18, and 24 Ramaḍân as the date of the first revelation.[5] It should be noted that none of these reports may be regarded as authentic, for none of them goes back to the time of the Prophet and there are either unidentified (مجهول) or untrustworthy persons in the chains of narrators. Hence these reports cannot be given preference to the authentic ones cited above.

It may also be pointed out that in describing the beginning of revelation Ibn Isḥâq quotes, in addition to the *'âyahs* cited above, *'âyahs* 8:41 (*sûrat al-Naḥl*) which says: "... if you believe in Allah and in what We sent down to Our servant on the day of distinguishing (between right and wrong) — the day of the meeting of the two hosts..." Ibn Isḥâq appears to have taken the expression "what We sent down to Our servant" as implying the revelation of the Qur'ân to the Prophet and points out that the day referred to here is that of the battle of Badr which took place on Friday, 17 Ramaḍan (2 H.).[6]

1. Some scholars take the "Blessed Night" mentioned in 44:3 to be the one in mid-Sha'bân. There is however no authentic *ḥadîth* in support of this view. Moreover, this view would in effect put 44:3 and 97:1 at variance with each other; for there is no difference of opinion about the "Night of Power" being in the month of Ramaḍân. As both the passages speak about the sending down of the Qur'ân, it cannot be suggested that the Qur'ân gives two different dates for the event.

2. See for instance Ibn Kathîr, *Tafsîr*, VIII, 468-470.

3. Al-Ḥâkim, *Al-Mustadrak*, III, 143.

4. Ibn Sa'd, I, 193-194; Al-Ṭabarî, *Târîkh*, II, 293 (I / 1141-1142).

5. Ibn Sa'd, I, 194; Al-Ṭabarî, *Târîkh*, II, 293-294 (I / 1142-1143).

6. Ibn Hishâm, I, 240.

Al-Ṭabarî also quotes this *'âyah* in support of the report which mentions 17 Ramaḍân as the date of the first revelation.[1] Following them some modern scholars have cited this *'âyah* as well in saying that the first revelation took place on 17 Ramaḍân. Further, to make this dating tally with what is stated in *'âyah* 44:3 and 97:1 it has been suggested that the "Blessed Night" or "Night of Power" in that year fell on 17 Ramaḍân.[2]

Now, there is no doubt that the *'âyah* 8:41 refers to the battle of Baḍr; but the expression "what We sent down to Our servant on the day of distinguishing" etc. does not mean the revelation of the Qur'ân as such. Nor does the context refer to that matter. It means the unseen assistance sent by Allah to the Prophet and the Muslims on that day. It also refers to the injunctions revealed on that occasion about the distribution of the spoils of war (*ghanîmah*). Indeed the statement in question is only the concluding part of a rather lengthy *'âyah* which begins with a description of the rules regarding the subject and adds the expression "if you believe etc." by way of emphasizing the need to abide by the rules laid down in this respect. None of the recognized commentators of the Qur'ân thinks that the allusion here is to the revelation of the Qur'ân. In fact all of them, including, interestingly enough, Al-Ṭabarî,[3] interpret the expression in question as meaning Allah's assistance (sending down of angels, etc.) on that day and the injuctions regarding the distribution of spoils of war.[4] It is also noteworthy that the term used in 8:41 is *yawm* (day); and although *yawm* in Arabic includes night as well, where "night" is specifically mentioned it means only night and does not include 'day'. Both 44:3 and 97:1 specifically mention "night" as the time of the first revelation, thereby excluding 'day' in connection with that event. On this ground too it would not by appropriate to adduce the statement in 8:41 in support of the date of the first revelation.

As regards the concept of *waḥy* (revelation) and its nature, particulary the nature of Qur'ânic *waḥy*, we shall have occasion to speak in a subsequent chapter. Here something should be said about the very early revelations and

1. Al-Ṭabarî, *Târîkh*, II, 294.

2. See for instance Muḥammad Ibn Muḥammad 'Abû Shahbah, *Sirat al-Rasûl Fî Ḍaw' al-Qur'ân wa al-Sunnah*, 1., Damascus, 1409 / 1988, pp. 259-260.

3. Al-Ṭabarî, *Tafsîr*, X, 8-9.

4. See comments on this *'âyah* (8:41) in the *tafsîrs* of Ibn Kathîr, Al-Qurṭubî, Al-Zamakhsharî, Al-Bayḍâwî, Al-Shawkânî, Al-Baghâwî, Al-Suyûṭî, and Ibn al-Jawzî.

their main teachings.

VI. THE EARLY REVELATIONS AND THEIR TEACHINGS

It has already been noted that after the receipt of the first revelation at Mount Ḥirâ' there was a pause in the coming of further *waḥy* to the Prophet. Reports vary regarding the length of this pause. Some say it lasted for a number of days not exceeding forty, some say it was for several months, while the others say that it was for two or three years.[1] The first view seems to be the correct one; for the pause was intended to give the Prophet a time to recover from the shock of the new experience and to enable him to settle himself with his new status. It is thus just not reasonable to assume that no further communication came to him for so long a time as two or three years. Secondly, two of the authentic reports relating to the Prophet's seeing the angel Jibrîl in the sky and thereafter receiving the second revelation clearly indicate that this took place shortly after his return from the cave of Ḥirâ' and not at all after years or months of that event.[2] Thirdly, it is an established fact that during the first three years of his mission the Prophet made a number of converts to Islam, started praying and towards the end of that period began openly calling his people to accept Islam. It is therefore simply inconceivable that he did all these without receiving any further revelation during that period. Fourthly, almost half of the Makkan part of the Qur'ân had been revealed before the revelation of *sûrat al-Naḥl* in which there is an indication to the Muslims' migration to Abyssinia which took place in the fifth vear of the mission. It is thus obvious that almost half of the Makkan part of the Qur'ân had been revealed during the first four years. Hence it is unlikely that for the first three years no further revelation came to the Prophet. Thus the pause in the coming of *waḥy* lasted at the most for several days or weeks.[3] At the end of that period the Prophet one day saw Jibrîl in the sky, as related earlier, and came back home with panic and asked his family to cover him. It was then that the next revelation came to him. It consisted of the first five *'âyahs* of *sûrat al-Muddaththir* (no.74). Thereafter revelations started coming to him regularly and without interruption.[4]

Reports regarding the order of revelations also are various and divergent.

1. See *Fatḥ al-Bârî*, I, 36-37; XII, 376-377.

2. *Bukhârî*, nos. 4922, 4924.

3. *Fatḥ al-Bârî*, I, 36-37; XII, 376-377; Ibn Sa'd, I, 191, 196. See also Muḥammad 'Izzat Darwazah, *op.cit.*, I, 137-138: Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad 'Abû Shahbah, *op.cit.*, I, 264. Sha'bî's report saying that the angel Isrâfîl instructed the Prophet for three years in various matters is not reliable.

4. *Bukhârî*, nos. 4, 3232, 4925, 4926, 4954.

Nevertheless there is a general unanimity among the authorities that the first few *'âyahs* each of *surahs al-'Alaq* (no.96), *al-Muddaththir* (no.74), *al-Qalam* (no.68) and *al-Muzzammil* (no.73) were the very earliest that were revealed. The remaining portions of these *surahs* were revealed subsequently; but from their internal evidence it appears that these also were not much later in time, except the last *'âyah* of *sûrat al-Muzzammil* (73:20) which was revealed at Madina.[1] Also there are reports that assign *sûrahs al-Fâtiḥah* (no.1), *al-Ḍuḥâ* (no.93) and *al-Sharḥ* (no.94) a very early date, some holding that *al-Fâtiḥah* was the very first in the order of reveations. However, according to the generally accepted order of revelations the first ten *sûrahs* are as follows:[2]

(1) *Al-'Alaq,*	(*surah*	no.	96)
(2) *Al-Muddaththir*	("	"	74)
(3) *Al-Qalam*	("	"	68)
(4) *Al-Muzzammil*	("	"	73)
(5) *Al-Fâtiḥah*	("	"	1)
(6) *Al-Masad*	("	"	101)
(7) *Al-Takwîr*	("	"	81)
(8) *Al- 'A'lâ*	("	"	87)
(9) *Al-Layl*	("	"	92)
(10) *Al-Fajr*	("	"	89)

It may be noted that some of these *surahs* contain allusions to the reaction of the Makkan unbelievers. This means that the Prophet had entered upon his mission as soon as he received the order contained in *'âyah* 2 of *sûrat al-Muddaththir* ("Rise and warn" - قم فأنذر) and that the opposition of the unbelievers started simultaneously.[3] Besides the above mentioned *surahs* there are a number of other *surahs* that are free from such allusions to the unbelievers. These *sûrahs,* as one scholar points out,[4] must also have been revealed at an early stage, most probably even before the later portions of *al-*

1. See for instance the *tafsîrs* of Al-Bayḍâwî and Al-Jalâlayn on this *sûrah.*

2. See the tables given in M. Khalîfa, *The Sublime Qur'ân and Orientalism*, London and New York, 1983, Appendix II, pp. 224-227 and 'Izzat Darwazah, *op.cit.*, I, 145-149.

3. See below, Ch. XXI, sec.I for a discussion on the theory of "secret" preaching for the first three years.

4. Muḥammad 'Izzat Darwazah, *op.cit.*, I, 134.

'Alaq, al-Qalam, al-Muddaththir, etc. Leaving aside this type of *sûrahs*, however, and taking into account only the ten above mentioned *sûrahs*, it may be stated that the basic teachings of Islam were all communicated in essence during the very initial period. These teachings may be grouped under the following heads:

(1) *Tawḥîd* (monotheism) in all its aspects, i.e., *tawḥîd al-rububiyyah* (the absolute Oneness and Exclusiveness of Allah as Creator, Sustainer, etc.), *tawḥîd al-'uluhiyyah* (the absolute Oneness and Exclusiveness of Allah as the object of worship and solicitation) and *tawḥîd al-'Asmâ' wa al-Ṣ ifât* (uniqueness of Names and Attributes).[1]

(2) Prayer (*ṣalât*) together with cleanliness (*ṭahârah*).

(3) *Risâlah*, i.e. the Messengership of Muḥammad (ﷺ)

(4) *al-'Âkhirah*, i.e., Life after death (the Resurrection, Judgement, Reward and Punishment).

(5) Individual responsibility on the Day of Judgement.

(6) Social responsibility of the wealthy and denunciation of blind materialism.

(7) Special instructions and words of encouragement and comfort to the Prophet.

(1) *Tawḥîd*: Monotheism (*tawḥîd)* is the central theme round which the entire teachings and injunctions of Islam revolve. So far as the first revelation is concerned this theme is conveyed by the expressions *rabb* and *khalaqa* used in the first two *'âyahs* of *sûrat al-'Alaq*. The meaning of *rabb* cannot be expressed by a single word of any other language, for instance by 'lord' in English; for the Arabic *rabb* has a comprehensive connotation of One Who creates, sustains, nourishes, develops and determines the growth, evolution and destiny of an object with generosity and care. Nothing could therefore be a more appropriate start for the revelation than to emphasize this attribute of God as the Creator and Sustainer. This is made all the more specific by the term *khalaqa* (created) used in the same first *'âyah* of the *sûrah*.

1. Non-Muslims, especially Christians, do not appear to be aware of these aspects of monotheism. They generally concentrate only on the first mentioned aspect and seem to think that this is the sole cocept of monotheism. Many of their onfusions may be traced to this lack of understanding of the other aspects of monotheism, particularly the second one, namely, *tawḥîd al-'ulûhiyyah* or Exclusiveness of Allah (God) as the Sole Object of worship and adoration.

The non-specification of any object to the verb is significant. It implies the "creation" as a whole embracing the universe and all that exists. After this reference to the creation in general, particular mention is made of man. It is pointed out that he also is created by Allah Alone. In this connection it is further mentioned how the Divine will and plan in the process of creation of man is executed. The initial two *'âyahs* of the *sûrah* thus speak of the origin of the universe as well as of man. They assert categorically that all that exists is created, ordered and fashioned by God Alone. Consequently these *'ayahs* also negative any suggestion, which an atheist is prone to advance, that the universe and man come into existence by 'chance', through the process of "natural evolution".

The concept of evolution in the sense of growth, development, fulfilment and fruition of each object and being, not in the sense of transformation of one species into another, is recognized, however. Indeed it is inherent in the term *rabb,* which includes the sense of nourisher, sustainer, etc. What is emphasized is that the growth, development and fulfilment of anything or being is also an act of God and a mark of His bounty. In this respect He is the "Most Bountiful", *al-'Akram*. An illustration of this attribute is His gift of that quality to man which constitutes the element of his highest development, namely, his intelligence, undersatnding and knowledge. Even the faculty which enables him to make use of the pen as the means of acquiring, preserving and transmitting knowledge is a gift of God Alone.

The concept of *tawḥîd al-rubûbiyyah* thus emphasized in the initial *'âyahs* of *sûrat al-'Alaq* is more plainly and clearly stated in the first *'âyah* of *sûrat al-Fâtiḥah* — "All praise is due to Allah, the *Rabb* of all the worlds." The expression "all the worlds" (*al-'âlamîn*) is very significant. It indicates the comprehensiveness and perfection of Allah's creation as well as the nature and characteristics of each unit of creation. For, on a closer look, it should be clear to anyone that each individual unit or item of God's creation, for instance a man or a constellation, constitutes a world by itself. Similarly, the second *'âyah* of the *sûrah* emphasizes God's attribute of mercy and bounty — "He is the Universally Compassionate (*al-Raḥmân* الرحمـٰن), the "Supremely Kind" (*al-Raḥîm* الرحيم). The same concept of *tawḥîd al-Rubûbiyyah* is repeated in 87:2-3 (*surat al-'A'lâ*) thus: "(He), Who created and gave final form and shape; (He) Who determined the proportions and guided."[1]

1. The text runs thus: ﴿الذى خلق فسوّى * والذى قدر فهدىٰ﴾

Along with this inculcation of the concept of *tawḥîd al-rubûbiyyah* the theme of *tawḥîd al-'ulûhiyyah* also was brought home. Indeed the latter was only a natural outcome of the former. Since Allah alone is the Creator, Sustainer, etc., it therefore behoves man to worship and beseech Him Alone, to the exclusion of every other being or thing. In fact this latter aspect of monotheism was more significant in the context of the contemporary Arabian situation; for though polytheism and idol-worship ran rampant, the idea of Allah as the Supreme Creator and Arbiter had not been totally lost sight of. In fact the gods and goddesses were set up as intermediaries and intercessors with Allah. In this context the emphasis on *tawḥîd al-'ulûhiyyah*, that is, the need and propriety of worshipping Allah Alone to the exclusion of all other entities and deities, was very essential. This concept is expressed in 1:4 thus: "Thee do we worship and Thine aid we seek."[1] The same thing is conveyed in 73:9 more unmistakably thus: "He is the *Rabb* of the east and the west. There is none entitled to be worshipeed (*'ilâh* إلـه) except He. So take Him as your Guardian-Trustee."[2]

(2) Prayer: The practical implementation of *tawḥîd al-'ulûhiyyah* was the performance of prayer and worship to Allah Alone. This was therefore also enjoined in the early revelations. The earliest passage containing an exhortation to prayer is 73:2 which asks the Prophet to "Stand (in prayer) by night, except for a little while of it﴿قم الّيل إلا قليلا﴾." All the commentators agree in saying that "stand by night" here means standing in prayer (*ṣalât*). Similarly 74:42-43 makes it clear that the duty to perform prayer had already been enjoined before the revelation of this passage. For, it says that when on the Day of Judgement the sinners will be asked what had led them to the hell, they will reply: "We were not of those who prayed"﴿قالوا لم نك من المصلين﴾. Conversely, 87:14-15 says that those who purify themselves, recite their Lord's name and pray will prosper and be successful ﴿قد أفلح من تزكّى*وذكر اسم ربه فصلّى﴾. More positive and ummistakable is, however, the passage 96:9-19. The first *'âyah* in this passage refers to an opponent of Islam who forbade a servant of Allah (عبداً i.e. the Prophet) while he set himself to perform prayer. Then *'âyahs* 10-18 make further remarks about that opponent and exhorts in the concluding *'âyah* thus: "Nay, never obey him; but prostrate yourself and come close to God."[3] The sequence of the *'âyahs* conclusively demonstrates

1. The text runs thus: ﴿إياك نعبد وإياك نستعين﴾
2. The text runs thus: ﴿رب المشرق والمغرب لا إلـه إلا هو فاتخذه وكيلا﴾
1. The text runs as follows: ﴿كلا لا تطعه واسجد واقترب﴾

that the expression "prostrate yourself and come closer to God" constitutes a positive order to continue performing prayer (*ṣalât*) disregarding the opposition of the enemy of Islam. It also implies that *ṣalât* is the best means of coming closer to God.

Indeed the first thing the Prophet was instructed to do after his call to prophethood was prayer (*ṣalât*). It is related that once when he was in the upper part of Makka the angel Jibrîl appeared before him in the form of a human being and performed ablution (*waḍû* or ceremonial cleanliness) in front of him in order to show him how to make it. Next Jibrîl prayed two *raka'ahs* of prayer, making the Prophet pray with him and then departed. The Prophet returned home and showed Khadîjah (r.a.) how to make ablution and pray. Accordingly she also performed ablution and prayed. [1]

(3) *Risâlah* (i.e. the Messengership of Muḥammad, ﷺ): The third point illustrated by the earliest revelations is that Muḥammad (ﷺ) had been commissioned as Allah's Messenger (*Rasûl*). In Islamic parlance the technical distinction between a *nabî* (prophet) and a *rasûl* (messenger) is that while both receive revelation from Allah, it is only the *rasûl* who is specifically commissioned to deliver and propagate it to men. This commission Muḥammad (ﷺ) received with the revelation of the first few *'âyahs* of *sûrat al-Muddaththir* (no.74) which starts by addressing the Prophet as follows:

﴿يـَـأيها المدثر * قم فأنذر * وربك فكبّر﴾ (٧٤: ١-٣)

"O wrapped in mantle, get up and warn; and your Lord, declare His supremacy." (74:1-3)

There is here a definite command to "warn" the people about the consequences of their deeds and to communicate to them the instructions contained in the revelations. Indeed, the very first and most important instruction to be given is also specified here, namely, "and your Lord, declare His supremacy". It meant that the Prophet was commanded to tell men that Allah is the Greatest (*Allahu 'Akbar* الله أكبر). In other words he was to declare that everything else including the imaginary gods and goddesses were subservient and subordinate to Allah. This is also an exhortation about *tawḥîd*. All the authorities agree in stating that with the revelation of the above mentioned passage the Prophet was specifically entrusted with the task of *risâlah*. It might be added that the sense of *risâlah* is implicit even in the first revelation; for the exhortation to "read" and the reference to "pen" contained therein implied that the Prophet was on the threshold of being entrusted with a scripture (*kitâb*) which he was to read out and which was to be preserved

1. Ibn Hishâm, I, 243-244; *Musnad*, IV, 161; Al-Ṭabarî, *Târîkh*, II, 307 (I / 1157).

and disseminated by means of the pen as well.

That Muḥammad (ﷺ) was commissioned as Allah's *rasûl* is stated more directly in *'âyah* 15 of *sûrat al-Muzzammil* wherein Allah says:

﴿إنا أرسلنا إليكم رسولا شـهدا عليكم كما أرسلنا إلى فرعون رسولا﴾ (٧٣:١٥)

"We have indeed sent to you a Messenger to be a witness concerning you, just as we had sent a Messenger to Pharaoh." (73:15).

The address is obviously made to Muḥammad's (ﷺ) contemporary as well as subsequent generations of men. The comparison with the Messenger sent to Pharaoh, i.e., with Mûsâ (p.b.h.) is meaningful. Like him, Muḥammad (ﷺ) also was a Messenger with a scripture containing clear rules of guidance and laws for man's conduct.

Some further references to Muḥammad's (ﷺ) having been commissioned as Allah's Messenger and his role as such are contained in 74:52-54 (*sûrat al-Muddaththir*), 81:15-19 (*sûrat al-Takwîr*) and 87:18-19 (*sûrat al-'A'lâ*). The first passage (74:52-54) refers to the Makkan unbelievers' importunity in demanding that they be each given an open scroll of revelation ﴿صحفا منشرة﴾ and emphasizes that such could never have been the case and that what the Prophet was delivering to them was "certainly a memento" ﴿كلا إنه تذكرة﴾. Similarly the passage 81:15-29 declares, in protest against the unbelievers' various allegations, that the Prophet was neither "one possessed" (مجنون) nor giving out "the words of a satan" ﴿وما هو بقول شيطان﴾, but he was delivering only what he had received through the angel whom he saw in the clear horizon ﴿بالأفق المبين﴾ and that it was indeed "a revelation to all the worlds" ﴿إن هو إلا ذكر للعـلمين﴾. The passage thus clearly depicts the Prophet as delivering the revelation he had received. More specific is 87:9 which categorically commands the Prophet as follows: ﴿فذكر إن نفعت الذكرى﴾ (٨٧:٩)

"Therefore admonish; verily admonition benefits."

(4) *The Life after death* (الآخرة): This subject occupies an important place in the early revelations. In fact in all the 10 *sûrahs* under consideration it finds prominent mention. And significantly enough, the very *sûrat al-'Alaq* which starts with a mention of man's origin also points out his ultimate destination —"Verily to thy Lord (*Rabb*) is the return." ﴿إن إلى ربك الرجعى﴾. This short but incisive expression underscores another basic fact, namely, the transitoriness of man's life on earth. In contrast, the life in the hereafter, *al-'Âkhirah*, is described as the best and more enduring ﴿والآخرة خير وأبقى﴾.[1] The

1. 87:17 (*sûrat al-'A'lâ*).

starting point of that life is the end of the world, followed by resurrection (*al-ba'th*) and the Day of Judgement (*al-qiyâmah; yawm al-dîn*). Allah Alone is the Master of that Day.[1] Some graphic accounts of those inevitable events are provided, for instance, by 81:1-14 (*sûrat al-Takwîr*), 73:12-14 (*sûrat al-Muzzammil*), 74:8-10, 26-31, 35-51, 53 (*sûrat al-Muddaththir*), 87:12-13 (*sûrat al-'A'la*), 89:21-30 (*Sûrat al-Fajr*) and 92:13-18 (*sûrat al-Layl*). By way of illustration only the first mentioned passage may be quoted. It runs as follows:

﴿إذا الشمس كورت * وإذا النجوم انكدرت * وإذا الجبال سيرت * وإذا العشار عطلت * وإذا الوحوش حشرت * وإذا البحار سجرت * وإذا النفوس زوجت * وإذا الموءدة سيلت * بأى ذنب قتلت * وإذا الصحف نشرت * وإذا السماء كشطت * وإذا الجحيم سعرت * وإذا الجنة أزلفت * علمت نفس ما أحضرت﴾ (٨١: ١- ١٤)

"When the sun is folded up; when the stars lose their lustre; when the mountains are scattered; when the ten-month pregnant she-camels are left unattended; when the wild beasts are herded together (with men); when the oceans are made to boil and burn; when the souls are reunited (with their bodies); when the female infant buried alive shall be asked, for what sin was she killed; when the scrolls (of deeds) shall be unfolded; when the sky shall be laid bare; when the hell (*jahannam*) shall be set blazing and when the paradise (*jannah*) shall be brought near, then shall each individual know what it wrought." (81:1-14).

In fact the most important aspect of the Prophet's mission was to remind man about the life in the hereafter, to warn him about the trials of resurrection, the Day of Judgement and about the dire consequences for the wrong-doers. At the same time he delivered good tidings of an eternal and blissful life for the virtuous. Hence he is often described as *bashîr* and *nadhîr* (Conveyer of good tidings and Warner, respectively) in the Qur'ân.

(5) *Individual responsibility*: On the Day of Judgement every person will be singly and individually accountable for his deeds. No one else's intercession or atonement will be of any avail on that day. Every person will be rewarded or punished according to his performances in this world. This is clearly emphasized in the last *'âyah* of the passage quoted above as well as in 74:38 which runs as follows: ﴿كل نفس بما كسبت رهينة﴾

"Every individual is a pledge for what it acquires (of merits and demerits)." (74:38)

(6) *Social responsibility of the wealthy*: But man becomes oblivious of the life in the hereafter, indeed of God, because of his total absorption in worldly life and because of his blind materialism and inordinate love for wealth. This

1. 1:4 (*sûrat al-Fâtiḥah*).

in turn makes him selfish, haughty and cruel not only towards his more unfortunate fellow-beings, but even towards his own kith and kin. This fatal social and moral malady is identified in the early revelations and man is warned against it. Thus 87:16 remarks: "Nay (behold), you prefer the life of this world ﴿بل تؤثرون الحيوٰة الدنيا﴾,[1] while in fact the life in the hereafter is the best and the more enduring. He is therefore reminded of the immense social responsibility that wealth entails. It is pointed out that he will attain a successful and happy life in the hereafter only if he acts up to that responsibility. Thus 92:5 says:

﴿فأما من أعطىٰ واتّقىٰ * وصدق بالحسنىٰ * فسنيسره لليسرىٰ * وأما من بخل واستغنىٰ * وكذب بالحسنىٰ * فسنيسرهُ للعسرىٰ * وما يغني عنه ماله إذا تردىٰ﴾ (٩٢: ٥- ١١)

"So he who gives in charity and fears God, and testifies to the truth of the best (i.e. monotheism[2]), We shall indeed make smooth for him the path of bliss; but he who is avaricious and deems himself self-sufficient, and rejects the truth of what is the best, We shall indeed make smooth for him the path to misery. Nor shall his wealth be of avail to him when he perishes." (92:5-11)

Continuing the theme the same *sûrah* further says that those who thus fail in their duty are really the "the most unfortunate ones" (الأشقى) and it is they who will enter the blazing fire. On the other hand, those who spend their wealth in self-purification and for the sake of God, they will be considered the "most devoted" ones (الأتقى) and they will soon be happy and pleased. ﴿ولسوف يرضىٰ﴾.[3]

Affluence is indeed a test for man. He should not be puffed up with it, thinking himself to be God's favoured one. Nor should straitened circumstances make him despair of God. Man should not be a slave to mammon, nor should he ever arrogate to himself what is not his share of fortune. He should always be alive to his duty towards the poor, the orphan and the needy. These teachings are very effectively communicated in 89: 15-23 which runs as follows:

﴿فأما الإنسٰن إذا ما ابتلٰـه ربه فأكرمه ونعمه فيقول ربّي أكرمن * وأما إذا ما ابتلٰـه فقدر عليه رزقه فيقول ربّي أهٰنن * كلا بل لا تكرمون اليتيم * ولا تحٰضّون على طعام المسكين * وتأكلون التراث أكلا لمّا * وتحبون المال حبّا جمّا * كلا إذا دكت الأرض دكّا دكّا * وجاء ربّك والملك صفّا صفّا * وجايء يومئذ بجهنم يومئذ يتذكر الإنسٰن وأنّىٰ له الذكرىٰ﴾ (٨٩: ١٥- ٢٣)

1. Q. 87:16 (*sûrat al-'A'lâ*).
2. See for instance *Tafsîr al-Bayḍâwî* and *Tafsîr al-Jalâlayn* on this *'âyah*.
3. 92:15-21 (*sûrat al-Layl*).

"As for man, when his Lord puts him to test, bestowing upon him honour and fortune, he says: 'My Lord has honoured me'; but when He puts him to test (in another way) and limits his means, he says: 'My Lord has disgraced me.' Nay, rather you do not respect (the claims of) the orphan, nor do you urge one another to feed the poor; and you eat up (another's share in) the inheritance, devouring it entirely, and you love wealth with absorbing fondness. Nay, when the earth is pounded to powder, and your Lord makes His Apperance and the angels file up in rows — that day, when the hell is brought forth — that day man will recollect (the admonitions), but of what avail will it be for him to recollect then!" (89:15-23).

(7) *Special instructions to the Prophet*: The other aspect of the early revelations was some words of consolation and special instructions for the Prophet. The first thing to note in this connection is the very affectionate terms used in addressing the Prophet at two early occasions — the revelation of the first few *'âyahs* respectively of *sûrahs al-Muddaththir* (no.74) and *al-Muzzammil* (no. 73). The expressions used are, respectively, "O you covered in mantle" and "O you enwrapped in robes", instead of "O Muḥammad" (ﷺ) or "O Prophet". Reports regarding the revelation of these passages say that the Prophet, being panic-stricken on seeing the angel Jibrîl in his actual form in the sky, hurried back home and had himself covered with a mantle or cloak. Hence this form of address. But whatever the occasion and situation there is no doubt that the specific forms of address were intended to convey to the Prophet the depth of affection and consideration with which he was being treated and to reassure him that he was indeed chosen of God.

The first of these passages (i.e. the first seven *'âyahs* of *sûrat al-Muddaththir*) also contains two special instructions to the Prophet relating to the work of propagation which he was enjoined in the second *'âyah* to embark upon. One of these instructions is given in the sixth *'âyah* which says "Do not show favour expecting to get an increase of it in return" (ولا تمنن تستكثر). In other words, though the revelation which the Prophet was commissioned to deliver was a great boon to mankind, he was not to expect any worldly gains out of that work. From the very start, thus, it was emphasized that the Prophet's mission was for the sake of Allah alone, not for any self-interest or personal motive.

The second item of instruction is contained in *'âyah* 7 which says: "And for (the cause of) your Lord, be patient and constant" ﴿ولربك فاصبر﴾. This was a very timely and important piece of advice as well as a forewarning of the shape of things to come. It indicated that the task he was being entrusted

with (i.e. propagation and giving warning) would entail immense hardships, opposition and enmity of others and that he should face them all with complete patience and constancy for the sake of Allah. The same warning is discernible in 73:5 which says: "Soon We shall send down to you a weighty word." ﴿إنا سنلقي عليك قولا ثقيلا﴾.

Other special instructions and consolatory expressions contained in the early passages relate to the opposition and obstinacy of the unbelievers. These would therefore be considered when that topic is taken up in a subsequent chapter. It may only be noted here that the teachings outlined above are based only on the ten *sûrahs* mentioned at the beginning of this section. Needless to say, the same teachings and instructions form the bulk of the subject-matter of the Qur'ân and they are repeated and elaborated with numerous evidences and illustrations in the rest of the *sûrahs*.

Before proceeding to see how the Prophet started the work of propagation and with what results, it would be appropriate to take note of the views and assumptions of the orientalists about *waḥy* in general.

CHAPTER XVII

WAḤY AND THE ORIENTALISTS:
1. THE VIEWS OF MUIR AND MARGOLIOUTH

The coming of *waḥy* to Muḥammad (ﷺ) is the central affair of his life. His claim to Prophethood and Messengership of Allah, the genuineness of the Qur'ân as Allah's words and status of Islam as a divinely communicated religion, all rest upon this affair. Naturally, therefore, the subject of *waḥy* has received the orientalists' major attention and they have advanced a good deal of assumptions and theories about it. In general, the aim of all these theories and assumptions is to show, by one device or another, that the texts of revelations making up the Qur'ân were Muḥammad's (ﷺ) own composition. The most that the professedly objective orientalists concede is that Muḥammad (ﷺ) might have been sincere in his conviction that he was inspired by God; nevertheless the texts he gave out as revelation were the products of his own mind and thought.

It is understandable that no Jew or Christian, nor, for that matter, a non-Muslim, could conscientiously admit that Muḥammad (ﷺ) was God's Messenger and that the Qur'ân is God's words without sacrificing his conviction or without being sceptical about his own faith. What is special with the orientalists, however, is that they do not leave the matter there by simply denying divine origin for the Qur'ân and divine commission for Muḥammad (ﷺ). They proceed further than that and endeavour to show, from the Islamic sources and texts, that that really is the case. And in so far as they do so, they in effect assume the role of missionaries of their own faiths and their writings degenerate in most cases into sophisticated anti-Islamic propaganda in the garb of historical research.

The present and the following three chapters examine the views of the orientalists about the coming of *waḥy* to the Prophet. An attempt has been made to analyze the arguments and reasonings of the orientalists themselves, pointing out the faults and defects in them, and also to show how they have twisted the facts and misinterpreted the texts in their attempt to sustain their assumptions. The present chapter deals with the views of Muir and Margoliouth. And as Watt seems to have inherited their ideas not directly from them but through his preceptor Bell, it has been thought necessary to deal with the latter's handling of the subject in the following chapter before

passing on to a consideration of Watt's treatment of it.

I. MUIR'S ASSUMPTIONS

Muir proceeds with his basic assumption that Muḥammad (ﷺ) was ambitious and that being depressed by the debasement of his people he sought relief in meditation and reflection at Mount Ḥirâ'. Gradually his "impulsive and susceptible mind", as Muir puts it, was "wrought up to the highest pitch of excitement" and certain grand ideas, namely, God the Sole Creator and Ruler, the wretchedness of heathenism and idolatry, resurrection, judgement and recompense of good and evil, and life after death, etc., took clear and definite shape before him. He gave vent to this realization and to his "inward struggling after truth" in "wild rhapsodical language, enforced often with incoherent oaths", in "fragments" of poetry and "soliloquy full of melancholy reflection upon the state and prospects of mankind" and in prayers for guidance. As instances of these early "fragments", as Muir terms them, he quotes in his own translation *sûrahs* 103 (*al-'asr*) and 100 (*al-'Âdiyât*); and as instances of "soliloquy" and prayer he quotes, respectively, *sûrahs* 101 (*al-Qâri'ah*) and 1 (*al-Fâtiḥah*).[1] Muir admits that these were "couched in words of rare force and beauty". Sometimes the "oracle", further says Muir, came "direct from the Deity, speaking as 'We', and to Mahomet as 'Thou'."[2] As an instance of this last category he quotes in translation *sûrah* 95 (*al-Tîn*).

Yet, continues Muir, the conviction of being inspired was not attained by Muḥammad (ﷺ). It came to him "after a protracted period of mental throes." In the meantime he is said to have raised the "voice of expostulation and alarm", as in *sûrah* 104 (*al-Humazah*), and to have alluded to Arab and Jewish legends as well as to "national miracles" and sentiments. As instances of these, part of *sûrah* 89 (*al-Fajr*) and *sûrahs* 105 and 106 (*al-Fîl* and *al-'Îlâf*) in full are quoted in translation.[3] Muḥammad, (ﷺ) says Muir, was still groping for the truth, and *sûrah* 90 (*al-Balad*) is quoted in full in translation in support of this statement.[4]

According to Muir the Prophet thus continued to give "vent to his reveries in poetry" for several years "before he assumed the office of a divine teacher."[5] During this period a small group including Waraqah, 'Alî,

1. Muir, *Life etc.*, 3 rd edn., 35-39.
2. *Ibid.*, 39.
3. *Ibid.*, 39-40.
4. *Ibid.*, 41.
5. *Ibid.*

Khadîjah and 'Abû Bakr (r.a.) are said to have become his followers, the first three putting the early *sûrahs* to writing, for "Mahomet did not himself write."[1] Outside that little circle, continues Muir, his "warning and expostulation were met by gross ignorance and repellent darkness"— his kind uncle 'Abû Ṭâlib smiled at his enthusiasm, another uncle, 'Abû Lahab, mocked at him, while the Quraysh leader 'Abû Jahl and his group sneered at him and the general body of Quraysh remained "careless and indifferent."

At such stage, says Muir, the need for appearing as a Prophet was brought home to Muḥammad (ﷺ) when, the "more susceptible among the citizens", while listening to him, pointed out that they would lead a purer life if a Prophet was sent to them, just as Prophets had been sent to the Jews and Christians. In support of this statement Muir cites the Qur'ânic passage 35:42 [2] and says that Muḥammad (ﷺ) "felt the force of the reply" and made a searching of his own heart whereby he came to the conviction that "the flow of burning thought, the spontaneous burst of eloquence, and the heavenly speech" which he had been putting forth all constituted a "supernatural call, a divine mission".[3] In such a state of "grievous mental distraction" and "deep depression", says Muir, Muḥammad (ﷺ) sought reassurance in God's past favours on him as is evident from *sûrahs* 93 (*al-Ḍuḥâ*) and 94 (*al-Sharḥ*).[4] Nonetheless his mental tension was so insupportable that he several times meditated suicide, for, as the Qur'ân emphasizes, no sin was more fearful "than to speak falsely in the name of God." Thus, as he was once about to throw himself headlong from one of the wild cliffs, he was held back by an "invisible" influence. He was still not sure whether that influence was divine or diabolical; but his wife Khadîjah (r.a.) "tried the spirits" and assured him that his "visitant" was not "wicked, but innocent and virtuous". Thereupon belief in divine mission "mingled with ambition" was revived in him and he started visualizing a united people abjuring idolatry.[5] He also pondered over the instances of Mûsa and "other Jewish chieftains" and persuaded himself that the people of Syria, Persia, Egypt, Abyssinia, etc, "weary of strife and discord", would flock to him if he proclaimed himself what he surely felt

1. *Ibid.*
2. *Ibid.*, 42.
3. *Ibid.*, 42-43.
4. *Ibid.* 43. Quoted here in full.
5. *Ibid.*, 44. Muir supports this statement by quoting *sûrah* 110.

himself to be —"the Prophet of the Lord."[1] Ultimately his convictions were confirmed, says Muir, by "ecstatic trances" and he "fancied that he perceived a mission."[2] He awaited the inspiring influence of "the Holy Spirit".

In such a state of mind, while seated or wandering amidst the peaks of Ḥirâ', "an apparition rose before him". Jibrîl stood "close and clear beside him in a vision" and "approaching within 'two bow-lengths', brought from his master the memorable behest of *sûrat al-'Alaq*.[3] "Thus was Mahomet led", concludes Muir, "after a protracted period of doubt and hesitancy — to give forth his message as proceeding directly from the Almighty. Henceforth he spoke literally in the name of the Lord. And so scrupulous was he,... that every sentence of the Coran is prefaced by the divine command, SPEAK or SAY; which, if not expressed, is always to be understood."[4] Even after that he was taunted as a poet, a sorcerer or one possessed by the demons. Hence he fell back on his commission and in his perplexity stretched himself on his bed, wrapping his garments around him and "fell into a trance". The angel was "at hand" and the Prophet was "aroused from despondency to energy and action" by the reanimating message of *sûrat al-Muddaththir*.[5]

Muir claims that he has thus traced from the "various intimations gathered from the Coran itself" the steps by which Muḥammad (ﷺ) was led to assume the office of Prophet.[6] Muir then summarizes what he calls the traditional account by reproducing mainly the account given by Al-Wâqidî. In conclusion he refers to the manners and methods of the coming of wahy, which he calls the Prophet's "ecstatic periods" and says that those *were* "reveries of profound meditation, or swoons connected with morbid excitability of mental or physical constitution", which varied at different periods and under different circumstances.[7]

The implication of all these is that *waḥy* was something emanating from the Prophet's own mind and thought, the result of his reflection and contemplation. It was more or less a psychological phenomenon. Muir thus des-

1. *Ibid.*, 44-45.
2. *Ibid.*, 45.
3. *Ibid.*, 45-46. Muir quotes the entire *sûrah* in translation.
4. *Ibid.*, 46. Muir quotes in the footnote *sûrah* 112 (*al-'Ikhlâṣ*).
5. Ibid., 47-48. Muir Quotes in translahion the *sûrah* with slight omissions.
6. *Ibid.*,48.
7. *Ibid.*,51.

cribes the seeing of Jibrîl as "apparition"[1] or "vision", the Prophet's receipt of *waḥy* as "reveries"[2] and the instances of physical stresses which he sometimes experienced while receiving *waḥy* as "trance"[3] or "swoons"[4], etc.

The last mentioned aspect of Muir's suggestions is only an extension of his other assumption made in connection with the Prophet's childhood that he was a victim of epilepsy or fainting fits. This question has been dealt with earlier.[5] It may only be pointed out here, however, that later writers, though they seem to avoid using the terms epilepsy or fainting fits in connection with the coming of *waḥy*, in essence adopt the view in a modified form employing such terms as "self-hypnotism", "inducing of revelations", etc.

Also the view that *waḥy* was something emanating from the Prophet's consciousness and personality, rather than something extraneous to his own self, is indeed common to the writings of all the orientalists. Hence this point will be discussed when we have reveiwed the suggestions and reasonings of the others. Here the other assumptions of Muir may be discussed.

Muir's basic assumption is that Muḥammad (ﷺ) was ambitious and made preparations for playing the role of a Prophet. Yet it is suggested that he did not reach the conviction of being "inspired" till "after a protracted period of mental throes" and "honest striving after truth" and further that he gave vent to his "reveries" for "several years before he assumed the office of a divine teacher." Clearly the two strains are antithetical. If the Prophet had really been ambitious and had made plans and preparations for playing the role of a Prophet, he would not have embarked upon his project till after his plans had fully matured and he had settled his lines of action. On the other hand if, on account of his contemplation, reflection and "honest striving after truth" certain grand ideas "took clear and definite shape before him", then the Prophet did not obviously act according to prior plans and preparations. In fact Muir's theory that Muḥammad (ﷺ) felt the need for appearing as Prophet only after some of his listeners had said that they would lead a purer life if a Prophet was sent to them is a contradiction by himself of his theory

1. Meaning "the coming into view, especially of a ghost or the spirit of a dead person". *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*, (ed.A.S. Hornby), 19th imp., 1984.

2. Meaning "condition of being lost in dreamy, pleasant thoughts". *Ibid.*

3. Meaning "sleep-like condition; abnormal dreamy state; hypnotic state". *Ibid.*

4. Meaning "fainting fit" (archaic). *Ibid.*

5. *Supra*, pp.156-159.

of ambiton and preparation on the Prophet's part.

In truth the case was neither the result of plans and peparation nor that of meditation and contemplation. The Prophet did of course engage himself in solitary prayer and reflection, but the text he delivered to his people was no result of his contemplation. It was something entirely extraneous to himself and he had in no way thought of it nor expected it. That was the reason why he was bewildered, puzzled and terrified at the sudden turn of events and was not initially sure of his new positon. His uncertainty was clearly due to the absence of any design and ambition on his part and to the suddenness and unexpectedness of the development. It also shows that the text which he recevied as revelation was no product of his thinking and reflection. But whatever the nature of his initial uncertainty and bewilderment, that state did not definitely last for "several years" and it was clearly the result of the coming of the first *waḥy* to him and of the circumstances attending it. Muir uses this "effect" of the coming of wahy to the Prophet as the cause and prior circusmtance of it — thus completely reversing the process of development as narrated in all the sources.

Muir states that the Prophet did not attain the conviction of being "inspired" till after a protracted period of mental throes and uncertainty and did not assume "the office of a divine teacher" for several years. Yet Muir would have us believe that the Prophet nonetheless preached his "ideas" in wild and impassioned language, in "fragments" of poetry and incoherent rhapsodies, and also called upon his people to accept his message so much so that while a small number became his followers, the generality of the Quraysh mocked at him and opposed him. Now, the questions that naturally suggest themselves to any reader of this account are: (a) Is it conceivable that a person who is not yet sure about his own position nor about the nature of his message would at the same time come out in the open, seek converts to his teachings and face insults and opposition in consequence? (b) Is it reasonable to assume that a group of persons, however small, would respond to his call unless they were convinced of the truth and divine origin of the message? And how could they be so while the preacher himself of the message was supposedly not so sure about himself and about the nature of his message? (c) Is it reasonable to think that the great body of the Quraysh would turn against the preacher unless they were sure about the seriousness of his calims and of his teachings? Muir does not of course ask himself these very natural questions but expects his readers to take the absurdity from him.

But the climax of inconsistency lies in the suggestion, on the one hand, that Muḥammad (ﷺ) did not give out his call "in the name of the Lord" till after several years of hesitation and groping for the truth, and, on the other, in the statement that during that initial period the "oracle" did sometimes "come direct from the Deity, speaking as 'We and to Maḥomet as 'Thou'." Now, one clearly fails to understand how this type of deliverences differ in any way from those made subsequently "in the name of the Lord". Indeed Muir's basic inconsistency lies in the fact that he cites as many as 18 Qur'ânic *sûrahs* to illustrate what he supposes to be the pre-*wahy* or pre-Qur'ânic deliverences of the Prophet!.

These inconsistencies are indeed conjured up to sustain the central absurdity of the story, namely, that the need for giving himself out as Prophet dawned upon Muḥammad (ﷺ) when in the course of his preaching "the more susceptible of the citizens" pointed out that they would lead a purer life if a Prophet was sent to them, like those unto the Jews and Christians. Thereupon, we are told, Muḥammad (ﷺ) reassessed his position and through a process of intense heart-searchings came to the conviction that he was divinely inspired and ultimately perceived the "vision" of the angel Jibrîl instructing him to "recite", i.e., to preach, "in the name of thy Lord". Now, imagine the position of a person who goes out to his people as a religious preacher and then, after having preached for several years and after having faced the opposition and ridicule of the bulk of his people, takes the hint in the remark of some of them that they would listen to the counsel of reform if a Prophet came to preach to them. Thereupon the preacher revises his role and reappears to his people telling them that he had now received God's commission so that they should follow him. No person with an iota of common sense and intelligence in him would render himself so ludicrous by acting so foolishly and naively. Yet, Muir not only attributes such naivety to the Prophet but also expects the readers to believe it.

This absurd story is made up by a series of twisting and mixing up of the facts on the one hand, and by misinterpreting the texts on the other. To begin with, Muir first clearly twists the well-known fact of the Prophet's bewilderment, apprehension and uncertainty consequent upon his receipt of the first revelation into a circumstance prior to that incident. He then mixes this bewilderment and uncertainty on the Prophet's part with the period of *fatrah* or pause in the coming of *waḥy*. Indeed his second twisting takes place in connection with this fact. He conveys the impression that the period of *fatrah*

is coterminous with the period during which the Prophet is alleged to have been struggling within himself and suffering from immense mental tension as to whether or not to give himself out as Prophet and speak in God's name. It may be noted that the nature of *fatrah*, as mentioned in all the reports about it, is completely different from what Muir would have us believe. Although the reports differ about its duration, they are all at one in saying that it was a period during which there was a pause in the coming of *waḥy*, not a period previous to it. The Prophet was of course anxious and restless during that period, but there is no suggestion in the sources that this restlessness was due to his mental tension about whether or not to speak in the name of God. Yet, Muir not only puts this unwarrantable interpretation on it but also assumes that during this period the Prophet was mentally so much tormented by the thought of whether or not to commit the grievous sin of speaking falsely in the name of God that he several times meditated suicide. Muir gives another twist in the facts here The report about the alleged suicide attempt is, as shown earlier, far from credible; but even taking the story as it is there is no suggestion in the sources that the cause of the alleged suicide attempt was the Prophet's mental tension about whether or not to speak falsely in God's name. The cause of his anxiety and tension was his non-receipt of *waḥy* for a period longer than the unsual intervals between such communications. Incidentally, the reports about *fatrah* and the whole affair of the Prophet's anxiety and tension on that account are conclusive evidences of the fact that *waḥy* was not something emanating from within the Prophet's own self, nor was it something of his own making.

Such twisting of the facts is blended with a series of misinterpretations of the texts, concluded by the misleading statement that the account of the steps by which Muḥammad (ﷺ) was led to assume the office of Prophet is gleaned from the "various intimations gathered from the Coran itself." It must at once be pointed out that the "steps" which Muir traces, namely, the Prophet's anxiety and bewilderment, the story of the alleged suicide attempt and the fact of *fatrah* or pause in the coming of *waḥy*, etc. are mentioned only in the reports, and not at all in the Qur'ân. And the Qur'ânic statements which Muir adduces as supportive evidence for his assumptions are mere misinterpretations by him. The first notable misuse of the Qur'ânic text on Muir's part is with regard to the statement about the sin of speaking falsely in the name of God. The Qur'ân of course denounces it as the most odious sin,

not once but at least at ten places.[1] A simple glance at these passages would make it clear that the statement is made either to rebut the unbelievers' allegation that what the Prophet was giving out to them was not really from God, or to denounce the practice of some of the People of the Book who tampered with God's revelation and gave out thier own statements as God's. Muir arbitrarily infers from this statement of the Qur'ân that the Prophet must have at an early stage of his career struggled within himself over the question of whether or not to speak falsely in God's name. There is nothing in the Qur'ân to warrant such an assumption. By making this assumption Muir in effect adopts the unbelievers' allegation and indirectly suggests that what the Prophet gave out was not really from God though he persuaded himself that it was so.

The second grave misinterpretation of Muir's is in connection with *sûrahs* 93 (*al-Ḍuḥa*) and 94 (*al-Sharḥ*) which he cites as evidence of the Prophet's alleged attempt to emancipate himself from the alleged mental tension as to whether or not to speak falsely in God's name and to reassure himself that he had indeed been favoured by God. The *sûrahs* in question of course remind the Prophet of God's favours on him; but there is nothing in them, or in the reports concerning the occasions of their revelation, to suggest that the Prophet recalled those past favours of God on him by way of emancipating himself from the mental tension as to whether or not to speak falsely in God's name or to persuade himself that what he was giving out constituted a divine mission. The explanation is solely Muir's imagination having no foundation in the Qur'ân itself, or in the reports.

The third misinterpretation is made in connection with the Qur'ânic passage 35:42 which says: "They swore their strongest oaths by God that if a warner came to them they would follow his guidance better than any of the (other) peoples..."[2] Muir assumes that this remark was made by the unbelievers to the Prophet when he was preaching to them and that because of this remark he thought of giving himself out as Prophet. There is nothing in the reports or in the Qur'ân itself to support this assumption. The utter unreasonableness of his undertaking any preaching work before being sure of his own position has already been pointed out. It may be noted here that the

1. See for instance 3:94; 6:21; 6:93; 6:144; 7:37; 10:17; 11:18; 18:15; 29:68. and 61:7. The most common form of the statement is: ﴿ومن أظلم ممن افترى على الله كذبا...﴾

2. The text runs as follows: ﴿وأقسموا بالله جهد أيمانهم لئن جاءهم نذير ليكونن أهدى من إحدى الأمم...﴾

statement cited was made by some leading Quraysh not to the Prophet but long before his emergence on the scene and as a reaction to the report which reached them that the Jews and Christians belied and disobeyed their Prophets.[1]

Lastly, Muir completely misunderstands or misinterprets the first *'âyah* of *sûrat al-'Alaq* when he assumes that since this *'âyah* is a command to the Prophet, "Read in the name of your Lord", previously to that he must have been preaching his doctrines *not* in the name of the Lord! Indeed, It is on a gross misinterpretation of this *'âyah* and the above noted passage 35:42 that Muir has built up his entire theory about what he calls the steps by which Muḥammad (ﷺ) came to assume the role of a divine teacher. And to sustain this theory he has assumed that the Prophet gave out as many as 18 or more *sûrahs* of the Qur'ân before he claimed to have received God's commission (Prophethood) and His communications (*waḥy*).

Whatever view one may take about the Qur'ânic passages cited by Muir, the utter absurdities and inconsistencies of the various aspects of his theory, as mentioned earlier, render it totally untenable. Nonetheless Muir's views have been taken over and adopted by his successor orientalists in some form or other. Notably, his theory of a period of "pre-wahy" or "pre-Qur'ân" deliverences by the Prophet has been reiterated by Bell, though on different grounds; while this, together with the basic premise of Muir's theory, that of gradual development of the Prophet's career and doctrines, have been taken over and pushed to an extreme by Watt who, as will be seen shortly, even suggests that the Prophet did not start with any clear concept of monotheism which came to him gradually after a prolonged period of preachings for as many as four or five years! But let us first consider the views of Margoliouth, Muir's immediate intellectual successor.

II. MARGOLIOUTH'S ASSUMPTIONS

Like Muir's, Margoliouth's treatment of the subject of *waḥy* is also an extension of the theme of ambition and design on the Prophet's part; but Margoliouth seems to have seen and avoided Muir's inconsistencies, though in the course of his treatment of the matter he has landed himself into fresh inconsistencies and absurdities. He assumes straightway that Muḥammad (ﷺ), being highly ambitious, carefully prepared himself for the role he wanted to paly; and when his plans matured fully he executed them skilfully.

1. See Al-Qurṭubî, *Tafsîr*,XIV,356; Al-Bayḍâwî, *Tafsîr*,II, 275. and Al-Shawkanî, *Tafsîr*, IV,355-356.

According to Margoliouth the whole affair of *waḥy* was "trickery" and "imposture" from first to last. It is alleged that Muḥammad (ﷺ) in accordance with his plans, acted the role of a "medium"[1] to "produce messages from the other world" and, in order to ensure his success, he so manoeuvred the "form" and "manner" of those messages that they would appear to be of "supernatural origin".[2] Thus, to produce a revelation he would "instinctively", to use Margoliouth's words, fall "into a violent agitation, his face would turn livid,[3] and he would cover himself with a blanket, from which he would emerge perspiring copiously, with a message ready."[4] This practice of covering himself with a blanket is said to have been retained by him "from first to last".[5] It is further alleged that the "epileptic fits" which the Prophet had experienced "at some time" suggested the manner which he "artificially produced", without "the slightest preparation", accompanied by "snoring and reddenning of the face."[6] This form, says Margoliouth, was "recognized as the normal form of inspiration."[7] So adept the Prophet is said to have become in the matter that he, as Margoliouth puts it, "would receive a divine communication in immediate answer to a question addressed him while he was eating, and after delivering it in this fashion, proceed to finish the morsel which he held in his hand when he was interrupted; or a revelation would come in answer to a question addressed him as he stood in the pulpit."[8]

As regards the contents of revelations Margoliouth reiterates his favourite theory that for these the Prophet "had to go back to the Jewish and Christian scriptures" until he had plenty to say.[9] It is said that he claimed it a miracle that "he was made acquainted with the contents of books which he had never read", but that subsequently he said that "the miracle lay in his unrivalled eloquence."[10] However, the "earliest scraps of revelation", says Margoliouth, are "imitations of the utterances of revivalist preachers" like Quss ibn

1. This characterization of the Prophet as "medium" has been adopted by others like Tor Andrae and Maxim Rodinson who, however, enlarges it as "megaphone".

2. Margoliouth, *op. cit.*,84.

3. Ibid., 85 (citing Al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, XXVIII, 4).

4. *Ibid.*

5. *Ibid.*,86.

6. *Ibid.* (citing *Musnad*, IV,222).

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid. (citing *Musnad,* VI,56 & III,21).

9. *Ibid.*, 80,86.

10. *Ibid.*,87.

Sâ'ida.[1] It is further alleged that the Prophet imitated the style of the ususal Arabian oratory, which was "some sort of rhyme" but "he little understood its nature."[2]

To bring home the theme of trickery and imposture Margoliouth attempts to belittle the Prophet's acknowledged integrity of character and honesty. For that purpose he draws on F. Podmore's work on spiritualism which is said to have shown that an honourable person may at the same time mystify his fellows and perform "trickery". "Mohammed", says Margoliouth, "possessed the same advantages as Podmore enumerates, and thereby won adherents..."[3] Nonetheless, continues Margoliouth, one of the Prophet's scribes was "convinced that it was imposture and discarded Islam in consequence".[4] In any case, concludes Margoliouth,"the sincerity of the medium" is of "little consequence" in studying "the political effectiveness of supernatural revelations."[5]

As regards the beginning of revelation Margoliouth says that it was the Prophet's character to bide his time till the favourable moment. Hence, like most "mediums" he made use of a "period of transition between the old life and the new."[6] Drawing an analogy with Joseph Smith, founder of the Mormon sect, who first wandered into a forest and subsequently gave out his "trance" utterances as divine message brought to his notice by angels, Margoliouth says that Muḥammad's (ﷺ) prophetic career likewise began with a period of solitude. "For one month of the year", says Margoliouth, "the Meccans practised a rite called *taḥannuth*," which was some sort of asceticism. During this month "it was Mohammed's custom to retire to a cave in Mt. Hira..." At some time in that month when he had been alone in the valley, "occurred the theophany (or its equivalent)" which led to his "starting as a divine messenger". Margoliouth says further that in the traditions relating to the matter the communication is done by Jibrîl, "the angel who in the New Testament conveys messages", but in the Qur'ân "it appears to be God Himself Who descended and at a distance of rather less than two bow-shots addressed the Prophet..." Jibrîl was substituted "afterwards", says

1. *Ibid.*
2. *Ibid.*,88.
3. *Ibid.*,88-89.
4. *Ibid.*,89.
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*,90.

Margoliouth, probably "due to the development of the Prophet's theology."[1]

These are in the main the views of Margoliouth regarding *waḥy* and the Prophet's assumption of the role of a religious teacher. Margoliouth clearly takes over from Muir the theme of ambition and preparation on the Prophet's part and develops it avioding Muir's inconsistencies. He also adopts the allegation of epilepsy and "trances" and attempts to fit these in his theory of "trickery" and imposture on the Prophet's part by saying that he artificailly produced the symptoms. Above all, Margoliouth stresses, equally as does Muir, that the text of the Qur'ân, or the revelations generally, are the Prophet's own composition. In all the essential respects, thus, Margoliouth does not deviate much from the lines laid down by his predecessor. He does of course add some new assumptions that will be noticed presently.

Leaving aside the allegation of ambition and preparation on the one hand, and that of epilepsy on the other, both of which have been dealt with previously, Margoliouth's main allegation is that of trickery on the Prophet's part. He suggests that the Prophet so planned the form and manner of the revelation that it might appear to be of supernatural origin. It is even said that the Prophet had taken his cue form the phenomena accompanying his alleged epileptic fits earlier in his life and that he reproduced those phenomena, such as falling into trance, snoring and reddenning of face, perspiring, or covering himself with a blanket, etc. It is further said that this "came to be recognized as the normal form of inspiration." But the instances cited by Margoliouth himself show not a uniform but various manners of the coming of revelations to the Prophet. Most of these manners obviously do not fit in with the theory of trickery. Thus, (a) with regard to the beginning of revelation, which should have been considered the most important and decisive instance to substantiate the theory, Margoliouth admits that the Prophet received it all alone in the "valley" where there was none else to witness the from and manner of its coming. Also, neither does Margoliouth allege, nor do the sources indicate, that there was any such symptom on that occasion as falling into a trance etc. (b) Margoliouth also cites the instances of the Prophet's receiving revelations while taking his meals or while standing on the pulpit. In these cases also the reports cited do not really suggest that the Prophet affected any such symptoms as snoring, reddenning of the face, falling into a trance, etc.[2]

1. *Ibid.*,90-91.

2. See *Musnad*,III,21 and VI,56 (reports respectively of 'A'ishah (r.a.) and 'Abû Sa'îd al-Khudrî, r.a.).

Moreover, these instances do not relate to the coming of Qur'ânic *waḥy* which is to be always distinguished from the other types of *waḥy* which the Prophet received from time to time. (c) Margoliouth also alleges that the Prophet let his "confederates act the part of Gobriel or let his followers identify some interlocutors of his with that angel."[1] The allegation is totally unjustified; but the allusion is clearly to the instances mentioned in the sources of Jibrîl's sometimes appearing in the form of a human being (sometimes as a stranger, sometimes in the appearance of a companion of the Prophet named Dâḥyah al-Kalbî) and delivering the revelation to him. In any case this "form", far from convincing the on-lookers about the supernatural origin of the text, was the more likely to expose the alleged trickery; for the individual who thus allegedly impersonated the angel was not to be let alone by the people who were generally in attendance upon the Prophet for most of the time. In all these cases there was no question of the Prophet's artificially reproducing the phenomena of epilepsy alleged to be the "normal manner of inspiration." Thus the insatnces cited by Margoliouth himself do not at all substantiate the allegation of trickery on the Prophet's part.

Secondly, Margoliouth is also inconsistent in his assumption about the Prophet's solitary prayer and stay (*taḥannuth*) at the cave of Ḥirâ'. Margoliouth suggests that like most "mediums" the Prophet planned it as a period of transition between the old life and the new. In the same breath, hoevever, it is stated that the Makkans practised this rite during the month of Ramaḍân each year and that it was "Mohammed's custom to retire to a cave in Mt. Ḥira" during that month. Now, the report about the Makkans' practising *taḥannuth* during Ramaḍân has been considered before;[2] but leaving aside that question, it is clearly inconsistent to suggest, as Margoliouth does, that the period of *taḥannuth* was a planned period of transition from the old life to the new, and then to say in the same breath that in doing *taḥannuth* at Ḥirâ' the Prophet was following a religious rite practised each year by the Makkans. The fact is that here Margoliouth has been trapped by another incorrect assumption on his part, namely, that the Prophet, prior to his call, followed the religion of the pagan Makkans including the worship of their gods and goddesses.[3] Margoliouth is so enamoured of this faulty assumption

1. Margoliouth, *op. cit.*,88 (citing Ibn Sa'd, II,520).
2. *Supra*, pp. 376, 379-380.
3. *Supra*, pp.195-203.

of his that he unguardedly introduces it here without caring to see that it is totally inconsistent with his theory of planned period of transition used by the Prophet. That Margoliouth labours here under his above mentioned assumption is clear from the fact that he adds : "He [the Prophet] would appear to have taken his family with him: yet probably their daily worship of Al-Lât or Al-'Uzzâ would not be carried on at such a time."[1] It must once again be stressed that the Prophet and his wife never performed the so-called daily worship of Al-Lât and Al- 'Uzzâ and, as shown earlier,[2] Margoliouth's statement in this respect is based on a gross mistake in understanding the *ḥadîth* in question. Here, however, he in effect contradicts one faulty assumption of his with another.

Similar inconsistency pervades Margoliouth's assumption regarding the language and contents of the revelation. Thus he says that the Prophet claimed his "unrivalled eloquence" to be a miracle[3] and then, a little further on, states that he merely imitated the "sort of rhyme" of the general Arabian oratory, "though he little understood it."[4] Again, with regard to the contents of the revelation Margoliouth observes that for them the Prophet "had to go back to Jewsih and Christian scriptures, until the course of events provided him with plenty to say."[5] Elaborating this assumption Margoliouth says further: "Once the head of the state Mohammed had plenty to say: but at the commencement of his career, the matter was not provided by the circumstances". Hence "he hit on the plan of borrowing from the Old or New Testament."[6]

The allegation of borrowing from the Jewish and Christian sources has been dealt with in a previous chapter.[7] Here it may be noted that Margoliouth practically nullifies his statement here by another gross inconsistency. Thus, having made the above mentioned remark he immediately carries out a *volte face* and says that the Prophet "followed this safe method" of borrowing from Judaeo-Christian scriptures when he was forced by circumstances to

1. Margoliouth, *op. cit.*,91. Margoliouth here again cites *Musnad*, IV,222.
2. *Supra*, pp.195-203.
3. Margoliouth, *op. cit.*, 87.
4. *Ibid.*, 88.
5. *Ibid.*, 80.
6. *Ibid.*, 86.
7. *Supra*, Chap. XI.

produce revelations in increasing quantities, but "the earliest scraps of revelation... appear to have been imitations of the utterances of revivalist preachers" like Quss ibn Sâ'ida.[1] Thus in one breath Margoliouth would have us believe that at the initial stage when the Prophet had not much to say he would borrow from the Judaeo-Christian scriptures until the progress of circumstances provided him with enough to say, and then, again, we are required to believe that the Prophet would adopt "this safe" method when the progress of circumstances made it necessary for him to produce revelations in increasing quantities! The inconsistency seems to have been due to an awareness on Margoliouth's part that the so-called "earliest scraps" of revelation" do not really bear any semblance with the Old and New Testament materials and that those parts of the Qur'ân that seem to resemble them in any way are not quite the initial revelations to the Prophet. As regards the anecdote about Quss and the Prophet's having allegedly heard him speak at 'Ukâẓ it is, as mentioned earlier,[2] far from being trustworthy. But even taking the report as it is, his reported utterances have but very faint resemblance with the early *sûrahs*. Nor would those utterances make up a fraction of the materials contained in the early revelations.

Such inconsistencies are blended with a good deal of twisting of the facts. Thus the instances mentioned in the sources of the Prophet's having sometimes experienced some physical hardships while receiving revelations have been twisted as symptoms of epilepsy; though anyone having an idea of the disease and its physical and mental effects on its victim would at once recognize that the Prophet's case was quite different from that ailment. A second twist with regard to the same fact is the assumption that the Prophet artificially produced those symptoms, though there is nothing in the sources to indicate that he had recourse to such trickery. Nor did the many followers and companions who closely surrounded him for over a score of years ever think such to be the case. And a third twist in the same fact is the assertion that such allegedly artificially produced symptoms were the "normal" form of inspiration; though it is quite clear from the sources that the instances of physical hardships accompanying the receipt of revelations were only exceptional and very few and far between.

Similarly the fact of the angel Jibrîl's sometimes appearing in the form of

1. Margoliouth, *op. cit.*,87.
2. *Supra*, pp. 240-241.

a human being has been twisted as the Prophet's letting "confederates act the part of Gabriel". As already mentioned, such a trickery was the more likely to expose the trick than to impress the divine nature of the revelation upon the audience present on such occasions. This particular twisting is all the more strange on Margoliouth's part; for he notes at the same time that Jibrîl is the angel "who in the New Testament conveys messages."[1] One could be tempted to ask: If it was nothing unnatural for Jibrîl to be the conveyer of messages in the case of the New Testament Prophets, why should it be so in the case of another Prophet. To prove trickery in the latter's case it is necessary to point out the true manners in which the angel used to convey messages to the New Testament Prophets. Neither Margoliouth nor any of his intellectual disciples who adopt his views have, however, done it.

The twisting of facts is geneally done through misinterpretation of the texts. Indeed it is often difficult to draw a line of distinction between the two. Such at least is the case of a writer of revelations who, it is alleged, abjured Islam because he was convinced that the affair of revelation was a fake.[2] The tradition cited by Margoliouth in fact records the despicable end of a person who used to write down revelations for the Prophet but who abjured Islam, joined the Makkan opposition and gave out as reason for his abandoning Islam that the Prophet used to dictate some expressions to him but he would write something else instead, and when asked to correct the mistake he would insist on not changing what he had written. So, he says, the Prophet would permit him to write whatever he liked to write. It is made to appear that this happened more than once.[3]

Now, clearly this statement is that of a person who had turned hostile. On the face of it it is thus not at all worthy of credence. Form the text of the report it is also clear that the person in question was an enemy in disguise who, by a fake prefession of Islam, had infiltrated the ranks of the Muslims with the object of subverting Islam and the text of the revelations. In any case, common sense and reason would never accept as true what is given out by the person; for no reasonable individual, especially one who is supposed to be a shrewd and calculated impostor, would ever allow any of his clerks or followers to write whatever he liked to, and would then allow that text to be

1. Masrgoliouth, *op. cit.*,91.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Musnad*, III,120-121.

given out as revelation. The report clearly indicates it to be a false allegation and describes the evil consequences that befell the calumniator. Margoliouth twists this false allegation as evidence of the fakeness of the revelation. Moreover, there is no reference in the report itself to the Prophet's ever artificially reproducing the "symptoms" which Margoliouth cites as marks of the alleged trickery. Strangely enough, he finds no inference to be drawn from the instance of thousands of intelligent and sensible persons who followed the Prophet with rare devotion and dedication throughout their lives except that they were all mere dupes to his trickery and imposture!

III. MARGOLIOUTH'S MISINTERPRETATION OF 53:4-10 (*SÛRAT AL-NAJM*)

The most glaring of his misinterpretations is Margoliouth's statement, and this is his most notable addition to Muir's assumptions, that from the Qur'ân it appears to be God Who Himself and "at a distance of rather less than two bowshots" delivered the revelation to the Prophet and that Jibrîl was substituted afterwards as the conveyer of revelations. Though Margoliouth does not specifically cite it, the allusion is clearly to the Qur'ânic passage 53:4-10 (*sûrat al-Najm*). Before taking this passage into account it may be pointed out that this assumption of Margoliouth's too is somewhat inconsistent with his general thesis. He labours all through to show that the Prophet only imitated the previous Prophets, that he derived his ideas and information from the Old and the New Testament, that his case was like that of Joseph Smith who unearthed the Book of Mormon "under the guidance of the angels" and that in the New Testament it is the angel Jibrîl who conveyed God's messages to His Prophets. Having said all these Margoliouth suggests, allegedly on the authority of the Qur'ân, that the Prophet initailly claimed to have received the revelation directly from God. It is not explained why Muḥammad (ﷺ) should have made such an unusual departure from the practice of all the other Prophets who received revelations through the angel and whom he is said to have merely imitated, and whether such a direct transaction with God, unseen and unobserved by anyone else, and keeping the angel completely out of the scene for a long time, would be the most appropriate method, as Margoliouth would have us believe the Prophet was careful to adopt, to impress the supernatural origin of his message upon his audience.

But let us consider the Qur'ânic passage on the basis of which Margoliouth advances his assumption. The entire passage 53:2-10 runs as follows:

﴿ما ضل صاحبكم وما غوىٰ (٢) وما ينطق عن الهوىٰ (٣) إن هو إلا وحي يوحىٰ (٤) علمه شديد القوىٰ (٥) ذو مرة فاستوىٰ (٦) وهو بالأفق الأعلىٰ (٧) ثم دنا فتدلىٰ (٨) فكان قاب قوسين أو أدنىٰ (٩) فأوحىٰ إلى عبده ما أوحىٰ (١٠)﴾ (٥٣: ٢-١٠)

"(2) Your companion (i.e. the Prophet) has not gone astray nor has he acted foolishly. (3) Nor does he speak out of (his) whims. (4) It is nothing but *waḥy* (communication) communicated (to him). (5) One very powerful taught him. (6) He possesses physical and mental robustness, and he positioned himself (7) while he was in the highest horizon. (8) Then he approached and came closer; (9) and was at a distance of two bow-lengths or even closer. (10) Thus did he communicate to His servant what He communicated." (53:2-10).

This passage has to be understood in the context of the situation in which it was revealed and also with reference to another Qur'ânic passage, 81: 19-28 (*sûrat al-Takwîr*) which deals with the same matter. According to Muslim classical scholars as well as many orientalists this latter passage is earlier in the order of revelation than 53:2-10.[1] Both the passages were revealed, however, in the context of the unblelievers' refusal to believe that the Prophet had received any revelation from God, alleging that he had been under the influence of an evil spirit or that he had gone off his head. Both the passges are rebuttals of that allegation. The passage 81:19-27 runs as follows:

﴿إنه لقول رسول كريم (١٩) ذى قوة عند ذى العرش مكين (٢٠) مطاع ثمَّ أمين (٢١) وما صاحبكم بمجنون (٢٢) ولقد رءاه بالأفق المبين (٢٣) وما هو على الغيب بضنين (٢٤) وما هو بقول شيطـٰن رجيم (٢٥) فأين تذهبون (٢٦) إن هو إلا ذكر للعـٰلمين (٢٧)﴾ (٨١: ١٩- ٢٧)

"(19) Verily this is a text (saying قول) delivered by an honourable messenger; (20) possessing power and with rank near the Lord of the Throne. (21) Obeyed there and trusted. (22) And your companion (i.e., the Prophet) is not one possessed. (23) Surelly he saw him (the honourable messenger) in the clear horizon. (24) Nor does he withhold a knowledege of the unseen. (25) Nor is it (the revelation) the word of a devil, accursed. (26) Then whither do you go? (27) It is nothing but a recital to all the worlds." (81:19-27).

The points common to both the passages may be noted. In the first place, both describe the Prophet's seeing an entity in the horizon. In 81:23, which is the earlier in the order of revelation, this entity is clearly described as "an honourable messenger", i.e., a messenger of God, an angel, and not God

1. According to the Muslim scholars *sûrahs al-Takwîr* and *al-Najm* were respectively the 7th and the 23rd in the order of revelation. Rodwell, Jeffery, Muir and Nöldeke hold them to be, respectively, 32nd and 46th, 24th and 27th, 27th and 43rd and 27th and 28th in the order of revelation.

Himself. Secondly, though the passage 53:2-10 does not specifically mention that the entity was a "messenger", his description there is very much similar to that in 81:19-27. Thus while in the latter passage he is described as one possessing power ﴿ذى قوة﴾ and position near the Lord of the Throne, in 53:2-10 he is described as "very powerful" ﴿شديد القوى﴾ and possessing physical and mental robustness ﴿ذو مرة﴾. Thirdly, both the passages rebut the allagations of the Makkan unbelievers and both speak of the Prophet as "your companion" (صاحبكم) because he was really one of them and was thoroughly known to them. Fourthly, both the passages emphasize that the Prophet was not "one possessed" (81:22) nor had he strayed from the right path and acted foolishly (53:2). Fifthly, both passages say that what the Prophet was giving out was a statement (قول) given to him by an honourable messenger (81:19) and taught him by "one very powerful" (53:5). Finally, both the passages reiterate that it was a revelation given to the Prophet (53:4), not the word of an evil spirit but a recital to all the worlds (81:25, 27). The two passges thus speak of the same subject, give the same reply to the same objections of the Makkan unbelievers and describe the entity seen in the horizon in similar phrases and adjectives. Each of the passages is thus explanatory of and complementary to the other. And since the earlier passage (81:19-27) specifically refers to the entity as God's messenger, it cannot be assumed that the later passage, 53:2-10, claimed it to be God Himself Who had descended to deliver the text to the Prophet. The same is true even if the order of revelation of the two passages is reversed. For, if the Prophet had been so inconsistent as to speak of the conveyer of the text as God in one piece of revelation and as the angel in another piece, he would have been very badly harassed by the unbelievers and his case would have been irretrievably damaged.

Even if the passage 53:2-10 is considered independently without any reference to 81:19-27 it cannot be assumed that the reference is to God.; for the passage contains decisive internal evidence to the contrary. Thus the entity is described there as possessing great strength ﴿شديد القوى﴾. Now, God is of course the Almighty and the Most Powerful, but he is nowhere described in the Qur'ân as *Shadîd al-Quwa* or "very powerful". The phrase is clearly indicative of relative strength, not of superlative power. It cannot therefore be a description of God. Similarly, the expression *dhu mirrah* ﴿ذو مرة﴾, signifying mental and intellectual quality or physical quality or both, is applicable only to a created being, and not to the Creator. Also, it is nowhere

mentioned in the Qur'ân as a description or attribute of God. Thirdly, a little further on in the same *sûrah* it is mentioned that the Prophet had a second glance of the same entity and then it is emphasized that what he saw was of the greatest signs of his Lord ﴿من ءايـت ربه الكبرى﴾.[1] Hence what the Prophet had seen on both the occasions was a sign, i.e., a wonderful creation of his Lord — the angel Jibrîl in his real shape and form — and not the Lord Himself.

Margoliouth's confusion may have been caused by the statement at 53:10- ﴿فأوحىٰ إلى عبده ما أوحىٰ﴾. To understand the meaning of this expression it is necessary to bear in mind three important things. In the first place, the letter *fa* (ف) with which the statement starts, has two senses - *istiqbâliyyah*, i.e., sequential, meaning "then"; and *tafsîriyyah*, i.e., explanatory, meaning "thus" or "so". The second thing to note is the expression *'abdihi* (عبده) in the statement. It definitely means His, i.e., God's servant and may therefore be taken to refer either to the Prophet or to the angel Jibrîl. And thirdly, it is essential to remember that in Arabic a pronoun, whether explicit or inherent in a verb, does not always relate to the immediate antecedent, as in English, but may relate to a nominative or subject understood from the context. Bearing these three things in mind, the meaning of the *'âyah* 53:10 may be understood. If the letter *fa* with which it starts is taken in its sequential sense, the meaning of the statement would be: Then he (the angel) communicated to His servant (i.e. Prophet) what He (or he) communicated". If, on the other hand, the letter *fa* is taken in its explanatory sense, then the meaning would be: Thus or So (by means of the angel) He (the Lord) did communicate to His servant what He communicated". It would be manifestly worng to disregard the internal evidences mentioned above, and also the context and the relation of the passage to the other passage, 81:19-27, and then, by fixing the eye on the expression *'abdihi* (عبده) to assume that the passage speaks of God Himself appearing in the horizon and then descending to the Prophet to deliver to him the text of revelation!

Margoliouth's assumption that the Prophet had initially claimed that God Himself had delivered to him the text is thus totally untenable. Despite its untenability, however, his assumption has been taken over and reiterated by his successors. Consequently they have also reiterated Margoliouth's other suggestion that Jibrîl was substituted as conveyer of revelation at a sub-

1. Q. 53:13,18.

sequent stage. Margoliouth's main thesis that Muḥammad (ﷺ) calculatedly and designingly acted the part of a Prophet and was otherwise an imposter is no new thing. It is essentially a repetition of the Medievel European approach to Islam and its Prophet. Recent European scholarship is of course shy of making such a blatant accusation against the Prophet; but when a recent scholar, as would be seen presently, speaks of the Prophet's "inducing" the symptoms of revelation,[1] it is in effect an echo of that medieval approach. In another respect Margoliouth appears to have indicated a new line of approach, that of having recourse to modern works on theosophy, philosophy or mysticism to explain the phenomenon of Islamic revelation. Thus while he uses the work of Podmore on spiritualism to suggest that the Prophet, though known to be honest, could nevertheless play trickery and be mystifying, 'Watt, as will be seen presently, has recourse to the work of A. Poulain on mysticism to suggest that *waḥy* was a sort of "intellectual locution" on the part of Muḥammad (ﷺ).[2]

1. *Infra*, Ch.XX, sec.II.
2. *Infra*, chapter. XX, secs. I & II.

CHAPTER XVIII

WAḤY AND THE ORIENTALISTS: II. BELL'S VIEWS

Before discussing Watt's treatment of the subject it is necessary to take into account Richard Bell's views about it; for, though Margoliouth bases his main assumption upon the Qur'ânic passage 53:2-10, it is Bell who devotes a good deal of attention to it and brings new arguments to bear on it; and because Watt, though advancing some new arguments, rests his conclusions essentially on Bell's assumptions. Bell is thus a link between Margoliouth and Watt.

Bell put forth his views mainly in a series of two articles pubished in two consecutive issues of *The Moslem World* for 1934.[1] In them he advanced the following suggestions:

(a) That the traditions regarding the coming of *waḥy* are inventions of a later age and are founded upon the Qur'ânic passage 53:1-18.

(b) That before he "recounted" the "visions" in the above mentioned passage the Prophet had been "speaking" in some manner but had not started delivering or composing the Qur'ân.

(c) That the term *waḥy* does not mean verbal communication of the text of the Qur'ân but "suggestion", "prompting" or "inspiration" to "compose" the Qur'ân.

(d) That according to the passage 53:1-18 the Prophet claimed to have seen Allah, but as he became better informed and also met with objections he mystified and introduced modifying verses in it giving the impression of a "spiritual vision".

(e) That as he subsequently became aware of the existence of angels he reasserted in *sûrah* 81 (*al-Takwîr*) that he had seen the angel messenger on the clear horizon; and

(f) That still more subsequently, at Madina, he introduced Jibrîl as the conveyer of *waḥy*.

It is to be noted that of these suggestions only two, those at (a) and (c),

1. Richard Bell, "Mohammed's call", *The Moslem World*, January, 1934, pp. 13-19 and "Mohammed's Visions", *ibid.*, April, 19-34, pp. 145-154. The term "Moslem" has subsequently been modified into "Muslim" in the title of the journal.

namely that the traditions regarding the coming of *waḥy* are later inventions and that *waḥy* means "suggestions" or "prompting", not verbal communication of a text, may be said to be Bell's own, though they are implicit in others' assumptions as well. These are made, however, to elaborate the other four suggestions that are originally Muir's and Margoliouth's. Thus the suggestion at (b), namely, that the Prophet had been "speaking" in some manner before delivering the Qur'ân is a reiteration of what Muir says about the Prophet's pre-*waḥy* or pre-Qur'ân deliverences.[1] Similarly the suggestions at (d), (e) and (f) are an elaboration of Margoliouth's assumptions that the Prophet initially calimed to have seen God and that the angel Jibrîl was introduced subsequently as the conveyer of revelations.[2] Let us now consider the suggestions one by one.

1. CONCERNING THE TRADITIONS ABOUT THE COMING OF *WAḤY*

Bell's objections to the traditions concerning the coming of *waḥy* proceed from and ultimately rest on the other assumptions that the Qur'ânic passage 53:1-18 shows that the Prophet at first claimed to have seen Allah and that further it contains subsequent modifications of that claim. Both the assumptions are, as already seen and as will be further clear presently, far from correct. But apart from that, Bell's reasons for discounting the traditions about the coming of *waḥy* are: (i) He says that 'Â'ishah (r.a.), the original authority for the traditions, "was not born at the time of the Call, and could at best have got the story" from the Prophet himself. Moreover, much has subsequently "been attributed to her which she probably never said."[3] (ii) The story as it has come down to us "in the earliest form" in Ibn Isḥâq's / Ibn Hishâm's work makes 'Â'ishah (r.a.) responsible only for "the first part of it, viz., that the Messenger of Allah began by seeing true visions in sleep; that they came to him like the dawn of the morning, and that he began to love solitude. The rest of the story is given on quite a different, and far less reliable *isnâd*."[4] (iii) The statement that *taḥannuth* (the solitary stay and prayer at Ḥirâ') was a pre-Islamic Quraysh practice, as mentioned in Ibn Isḥâq's work, is not correct. The "ascetic note in such a practice was entirely alien to Mohammed's nature" and the "accompanying fasts" have no support in the

1. See *supra*, pp.402-404.
2. See *supra*, pp. 418-422.
3. *The Moslem World*, January, 1934, p.14.
4. *Ibid.*

Qur'ân. "Fasting was not introduced till the Madinan period, and then as an imitation of Jewish practice."[1] (iv) The expression *Nâmûs*, derived from the Greek term *nomos* and meaning Jewish law, could not have been used by Waraqah ibn Nawfal in his reported conversation with the Prophet; for the Qur'ân does not contain the expression and, according to Bell, as the Prophet was fond of "borrowing religious technical terms it was to be expected that, if he had known this word he would have used it, especially if Waraqah had used it at such a momentous point in his life." Hence the "whole story is the invention of a later age."[2]

Clearly this last agrument (iv) calls for a substantiation of three other hypotheses before it could be adduced as a valid argument. These hypotheses are (a) that the Prophet himself composed the Qur'ân; (b) that he was fond of borrowing foreign religious technical terms and (c) that all unfamiliar terms (*gharâ'ib*) occurring in the *ḥadîth* literature should invariably be found in the Qur'ân. Needless to say that none of these hypetheses is an established and accepted fact. Particularly the crux of the whole argumentation, that the Prophet himself composed the Qur'ân, is the very point at issue and it should not therefore be first assumed as a fact and then that should not be made a point to prove that very fact. Bell here seems to have merely depended upon A. Jeffery's suggestion.[3] In fact this very argument about *Nâmûs* rebounds on Bell himself and destroys his thesis that the particular traditions about the coming of *waḥy* to the Prophet are inventions of a later age. For if, as Bell says, the word *Nâmûs* is of Greek origin meaning Jewish law and if the Prophet (or any one else) had fabricated the story when the alleged initial claim of the Prophet's having seen Allah had been allegedly modified and consequently the angel had been introduced as the conveyer of *waḥy*, he would definitely have used the term angel or Jibrîl in the story instead of the admittedly unfamiliar and, according to the meaning suggested, rather incongruous expression *Nâmûs* in it. Thus according to Bell's own reasoning the word *Nâmûs*, since it is used in the tradition, could not, even if Greek in origin, have meant Jewish law (and it is well to remember that words of foreign origin change meanings in the process of adoption and naturalization in another language) and that its very use in the tradition in question as an

1. *Ibid.*,16.
2. *Ibid.*
3. A. Jeffery, *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'ân*, Baroda, 1938. Bell must have seen the work before its publication.

expression of Waraqah's, not of the Prophet's nor of 'Â'ishah's, is evidence of the genuineness of the account.

As regards Bell's argument at (i) it is of course true that 'Â'ishah (r.a.) received the account from the Prophet himself. It is also likely that something might have been subsequently given out in her name which she probably never said. But this probability only calls for a more careful examination of the *isnâd* rather than for treating all traditions emanating from her as suspect. Bell seeks to discredit the whole story on the ground that *taḥannuth* was not a pre-Islamic Quraysh practice as given out in the version of the report in Ibn Isḥâq's work, nor was fasting, which is said to have accompanied it, introduced till at Madina. Now, without discussing whether fasting was not known in pre-Islamic Arabia or whether it was introduced in imitation of the Jews, it may be pointed out that 'Â'ishah's (r.a.) report about *taḥannuth*, as given in *Bukhârî*, does neither mention that it was a pre-Islamic Quraysh practice nor does it make any allusion to fasting being a necessary part of it. It is also to be noted that the reporters in Ibn Isḥâq's work do not claim to have received their account from her. Thus Bell's argument here suffers from a dual methodological fault. He seeks to discredit her account in general on the basis of statements that are nowhere claimed to have been made by her and also on the basis of an account which he himself acknowledges to have come down on a "far less reliable *isnâd*."

Again, Bell seems to admit the genuineness of the very first part of 'Â'ishah's (r.a.) report as reproduced in Ibn Isḥâq's work because, according to Bell, it is found here "in the earliest form". It says, as Bell puts it, "that the Messenger of Allah began by seeing true visions in his sleep; that they came to him like the dawn of the morning, and that he began to love solitude."[1] Bell emphasizes that this earliest version does not make her responsible for anything more than that. It is to be noted that Bell is not quite correct in translating the expression *al-ru'yâ al-ṣâdiqa* (الرؤيا الصادقة) here as "true visions". Its correct meaning is "true dreams", for *ru'yâ* in sleep means dreams, not visions. Bell is also not quite right in translating the expression (جاءته مثل فلق الصباح) as "they came to him like the dawn of the morning". Its correct sense is "they came true as the dawn of the morning". Be that as it may, two points need to be specially noted about this statement. First, it is obviously part of the story, not the whole of it; for 'Â'ishah (r.a.) could not

1. *M.W.*, 1934, p.14.

have stopped abruptly without indicating what the Prophet did or what happened to him after he began to love solitude. She must have said something in continuation and completion of the story. Second, whatever the nature of the *ru'yâ* in sleep, there is no hint here at the appearance of any entity before the Prophet at that stage. Nor does Bell seem to take what he translates as "visions" to be the ones which he assumes are "recounted" in the Qur'ânic passage 53:1-18. For, if it was the question of only a "vision" in sleep, i.e. a dream, no one would have bothered to controvert or discredit it, for anyone can experience any sort of unusual dreams in sleep. Clearly the "vision" which is supposed to have caused the controversy leading to the alleged clarification in the passage 53:1-18 must have been different from the dreams ("visions") in sleep and it must have taken place before its "recounting" in the above mentioned passage. The question that naturally arises is: How and when did the Prophet have that experience which he gave out to the people and which elicited criticisms, thereby making it necessary for him to "recount" and clarify it in the passage in question. Bell does not of course ask himself this question; but the part of 'Â'ishah's (r.a.) report quoted in Ibn Isḥâq's work and Bell's own theory both indicate that something remains to be said in completion of the story. That something is in fact related in 'Â'ishah's (r.a.) report which is given in full and correctly in *Bukhârî*; but it is given in Ibn Isḥâq's work in a different and less reliable form, by a different group of narrators who have at least the honesty of not citing 'Â'ishah (r.a.) as the authority for their version of the account.

While rejecting the story about *taḥannuth* and the Prophet's conversation with Waraqah, Bell does not elsewhere rule out the possibility of the Prophet's contact with the latter and such other people with a knowledge of Christianity and its scripture. Indeed such contacts are implicit throughout Bell's other thesis, *The Origin of Islam in its Christian Environment.*[1] Be that as it may, even in the present instance he implies that the Prophet had given out his initial experience at the outset of his career; for, if he had not, there would have been no need for "recounting" it. Therefore the question arises: to whom could the Prophet have first disclosed his experience, if not to such persons as his wife Khadîjah (r.a.) and their relative Waraqah who, by all accounts, were the most likely ones to listen to him with sympathy and attention? *Taḥannuth*, the experience at Ḥirâ' and the subsequent conversation

1. London, 1926.

with Waraqah, which are the two most imporatnat items in 'Â'ishah's (r.a.) report, thus appear to be just in the nature of things and are moreover in accord with Bell's own lines of argument.

II. THE ASSUMPTION OF PRE-QUR'ÂN DELIVERENCES

As regards the second assumption that prior to his recounting the "visions" in the passage 53:1-18 the Prophet had been "speaking" in "some manner" but had not started delivering or "composing" the Qur'ân, Bell's arguments are as follows: (i) The word *yanṭiqu* in the passage (*'âyah* 3) "is a general one and is not elsewhere associated with the recitation of the Qur'ân." (ii) The word 'Qur'ân' is derived from the syriac *qeryânâ.* Hence the idea of supplying a Qur'ân "was suggested by the scripture readings of the Christian church." Therefore the Prophet "had gathered some sort of a congregation before he set about supplying them with 'readings'." (iii) The word *'awḥâ* used in *'âyah* 4 of the passage does not "necessarily imply the communication of the words of the Qur'ân."[1] Also, the various uses of the word *waḥy* in the Qur'ân show that it means "suggestion", "prompting" or "inspiration."[2]

Now, the last argument (iii) relates mainly to the third of Bell's assumptions enumerated above, namely, the nature of *waḥy* in the Qur'ân. Hence this argument will be dealt with in the next section. As regards Bell's first argument (i), namely, that initially the Prophet had been only "speaking" in some manner and not delivering the Qur'ân and that he commenced delivering the Qur'ân only when he had gathered a sort of congregation, it is simply a reiteration of Muir's assumption noticed earlier. The faults in that assumption have already been noted.[3] So far as Bell's own reasonings in this connection are concerned, it may be noted that he puts a very narrow and rather misleading construction on the expression *yanṭ iqu* occurring in 53:3, divorcing the word from the whole context of the passage and the situation in which it was given out. The unmistakable purport of the passage is to contradict the unbelievers' objection to the effect that what the Prophet had been giving out to them was not God's words but the Prophet's own. In reply it is stated that the Prophet "does not speak out of his own whim; it is nothing but

1. *The Moslem World*, 1934, p.146.
2. *Ibid.*,147,148.
3. *Supra*,pp. 402-410.

a divine communication (*waḥy*) delivered (to him)." The expression is *mâ yanṭiqu* (does not speak), not simply *yanṭiqu* (he speaks). It is thus just the appropriate phrase in the context. It is not used simply in the general sense of "speaking", as Bell would have us believe, and it does not imply that the Prophet had been "only speaking in some manner". It implies that the Prophet had been claiming his deliverences to be God's communications, that the unbelievers were objecting to that claim and that the passage therefore rebuts that objection by categorically asserting that the Prophet did not speak out of his own mind — it was no statement of his own born out of his whims, but a *waḥy* (divine communication) communicated (to him). Bell totally misconstrues the expression divorcing it from the context of the passage. If the Prophet had not claimed that what he was giving out was God's words —Qur'ân— there would have been no reason for the unbelievers' objection and therefore no need for a rejoinder to that objection, as the passage in question incontrovertibly is.

Bell is also somewhat confusing and self-contradictory in his statements in this connection. He says in connection with the supposedly pre-Qur'ân deliverences that *waḥy* "does not mean the verbal communication of the text of a revelation, but it means 'suggestion', 'prompting' or 'inspiration' coming into a person's mind from outside himself."[1] He further says that the Prophet had, before the delivery of the passage in question, been only speaking "by *waḥy*, by suggestion from a heavenly person" whom he had seen.[2] Obviously Bell makes these statements to avoid the implication of the assertion in the passage that what the Prophet was giving out was not his speech but *waḥy* delivered to him. Bell is thus forced to give an interpretation of the expression *waḥy* in relation to what he calls pre-Qur'ân deliverences. But this interpretation of Bell's in effect eliminates the distinction between what is called the pre-Qur'ân deliverences and the deliverences constituting the Qur'ân. Bell is thus both confusing and self-contradictory. He himself nullifies his assumption of pre-Qur'ân deliverences by the Prophet.

As regards Bell's other assumption that the Prophet got the idea of delivering a Qur'ân (reading) from the scripture readings in the Christian church and that he thought of producing such "readings" only when he had already gathered a sort of a congregation round him, it is simply an absurd proposi-

1. *The Moslem World*, 1934, p.148.
2. *Ibid.*

tion inspired obviously by the similarly absurd assumption of Muir's that by his pre-*waḥy* or pre-Qur'ân utterances the Prophet had already gathered a band of followers when he thought of standing forth as a Prophet and speaking in the name of God.[1] And the same objections apply in Bell's case as well. For, it is simply unreasonable to think that any group of persons would become the Prophet's followers unless they were convinced of the truth of his position as a divinely commissioned teacher and of his utterances in relation to his teachings as divine communications. Moreover, if the Prophet got the idea of congregational "readings" from the scripture readings in the Christian church, it does not necessarily follow that he waited till he gathered a band round him. Intelligent and careful as he was by all accounts, he would have started his mission by having a set of readings ready at hand!

Lastly, Bell's statement that prior to his "recounting" of the "vision" in the passage 53:1-18 the Prophet had been only speaking in some manner implies that the passage 53:1-18 is the earliest part of the Qur'ân to be revealed. That proposition, however, is simply wrong. It is neither supported by the sources, in spite of the differences in the reports regarding the order of revelations, nor is it admitted by the orientalists themselves. Even Bell does not appear to strictly hold that view; and he in effect contradicts himself a little earlier when he says: "If Mohammed was commissioned to produce a Koran (recitation), then the command *'iqra'* (recite) would naturally come first. That argument may even now appeal to a critical mind, and indeed most European scholars have accepted the passage as the earliest."[2] Thus does Bell in effect say that before the delivery of the passage 53:1-18 the *'iqra'* passage of the Qur'ân had been revealed. Muḥammad (ﷺ) had thus not just been speaking in some manner, but delivering the Qur'ân, before the so-called "recounting" of the "vision" in 53:1-18.

III. BELL'S CONCEPT OF *WAḤY*

This brings us to the third in the series of Bell's assumptions, namely, his view of the nature and implications of *waḥy*. He points out some of the various senses in which the term *waḥy* and its derivatives are used in the Qur'ân and on that basis asserts that the general meaning of the word is "suggestion", "prompting" or "inspiration". He then cites some of the instances of *waḥy* where God gave directives to His Prophets to do some particular

1. See *supra*, pp. 402-406.
2. *The Moslem World*, 1934, p.17.

things, such as to Nûḥ to build the ark, to Mûsâ to set out with his people by night and to strike the rock with his staff and to Muḥammad (ﷺ) to follow the religion of Ibrâhîm. On the basis of such instances of God's *waḥy* to His Prophets Bell concludes that *waḥy* means suggestions or prompting "for a practical line of conduct."[1]

Now, before taking up the meaning of *waḥy* in general and that of Qur'ânic *waḥy* in particular, some general faults in Bell's analysis may be pointed out. To begin with, when he argues that *waḥy* means suggestions for a practical line of conduct, Bell does not go the whole way and does not explain how the suggestion or prompting, as he prefers to call it, could have been communicated to the Prophet. Also, if he had not been too inclined to use the terms "suggestions" and "prompting" he would have easily seen that the instances he cites are clearly God's "commands" and directives to His Prophets, and not merely suggestions. These commands and directives for the practical conduct, it may be pointed out, constitute God's words. The command *'iqra'*, which Bell admits to be the earliest passage of the Qur'ân, is God's word.

Bell seems to acknowledge this fact when he says that the "practical suggestions are indeed often formulated in direct speech" and that there are "cases in which the formula has reference to doctrine rather than to conduct."[2] Yet he insists that these formulations are "always quite short, the sort of phrase... which might flash into a person's mind after consideration of a question, as the summing up of the matter."[3] One may only remark here that if in the ultimate analysis *waḥy* means "the sort of phrase" which flashes into one's mind after consideration of a question as the decision and summing up of the matter, then there is no need for importing God or any external being into the scene and no sense in adding, as Bell does a few lines further on, that *waḥy* means "suggestion", "prompting" or "inspiration" which comes "into a person's mind apparently from outside himself."[4] The fact is that *waḥy*, in its *technical* sense, does not mean suggestion, prompting or inspiration, nor a person's intuition and conclusion after consideration of a matter, but divine communication to His Prophets and Messengers.

Continuing his analysis Bell says that *waḥy* means, "at any rate in the

1. *Ibid.*,147.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*,148.

early portions of the Qur'ân", not that it had been conveyed to the Prophet verbally, but "that the idea of composing a Qur'ân" had been "suggested" to him. Bell next states that as the Prophet's "theory of revelation developed" he "extended the signification of the word to cover the communication of long passages in verbal form"; for "there are some passages in which this would be *the natural implication*", such as 11:40, 12:120, 18:27 and 20:45.[1] Thus would Bell appear to suggest that parts of the Qur'ân are God's verbal communications and parts are not so. But he would not really commit himself to that position; for having made the above statement he attempts to neutralize its effect by saying that the passages referred to "are probably fairly late, and in all of them it would be at least possible to avoid giving the word the sense of actual verbal communication."[2] Clearly Bell here betrays his ultimate intention to "avoid", by any means, "giving the word the sense of actual verbal communication." One may only observe that it is of course *possible* to twist and "avoid" that sense, but that is "their natural implication", as Bell admits, perhaps unguardedly.

It may also be noted in this connection that whenever a Qur'ânic passage runs counter to his assumption Bell attempts to assign it either a late date or an earlier one, as it suits his purpose. The passages cited above are all Makkan. Even if for arguments' sake it is admitted that they are "probably fairly late", Bell does not appear consistent in his assertion that as the Prophet's theory of revelation developed he extended the signification of the word to cover verbal communication. For having said so he cites 42:50 (in fact 42:51) which says: "It is not for man that Allah speaks to him except by *waḥy*, or from behind a veil or He sends a messenger who communicates by His order what He wills..."[3] Bell states that according to this passage "it is impossible" to give the sense of verbal communication to the term *waḥy*.[4] And a little further on he states that in this passage "one almost sees Muḥammad's conception of how the revelation came to him, growing before our eyes..."[5] Thus Bell would have us believe in the same breath that as the Prophet's conception of *waḥy* developed he extented its meaning to cover

1. *Ibid.* The italicization is mine.
2. *Ibid.*
3. The passage runs as follows:
﴿ وما كان لبشر أن يكلمه الله إلا وحياً أو من وراءِ حجاب أو يُرسل رسولا فيوحيَ بإذنه ما يشاء إنه عليٌ حكيم ﴾ (٤٢ : ٥١)
4. *The Moslem World*, 1934, p.148.
5. *Ibid.*,152.

verbal communication, and that at the same time he said that *wahy* could not be verbal communication! The fact is that neither was the Prophet nor is the Qur'ân so inconsistent. It is Bell himself who has misunderstood the sense of *wahy* as given by the Qur'ân. He has also misunderstood the meaning of the passage 42: 51. It does in no way mean that *wahy* cannot be verbal communication; it merely describes the *manner and methods* of communicating God's words to man. It would seem that as the passage says that God does not speak to man directly, i.e., face to face, Bell takes *wahy* to mean God's "indirect speech" in the English grammatical sense!

That Bell puts that English grammatical sense of "indirect speech" is further clear from what he observes next, saying that the passage 42: 51 is a confession that the "direct" speech of Allah in some of the Qur'ânic passages where He speaks "in His proper person in the first person singular" is wrong. Bell writes: "There are still one or two passages in the Qur'ân in which Allah is made to speak in His own proper person in the first person singular; cf. li: 56- 58, lxxiv: 11- 15. If this direct speech of Allah to the Prophet was wrong, as the above passage seems to confess, how much more the claim to have actually seen Him."[1]

It should at once be pointed out that the passage does not say that *wahy* cannot be verbal communication; it does not confess that the statements in the Qur'ân in "direct speech" of Allah (in the English grammatical sense) are wrong. Bell's assumption throughout that the Qur'ân is the Prophet's own composition is wrong and it is the point at issue. Not only the "one or two passages" cited here, nor even those admitted by Bell to imply verbal communication, but the entire Qur'ân, whether a passage is formulated in "direct speech" or in "indirect speech", is verbal comunication of God's words. Also the assumption that the Prophet initially claimed to have seen Allah is wrong. Before taking up that assumption, however, it remains to see what actually is the signification of *wahy* glimpsed from the Qur'ân itself and where Bell has erred in thinking that *wahy* means "sugegstion" or "prompting" or "inspiration".

IV. *WAHY* IN THE QUR'ÂN AND THE 'QUR'ÂNIC *WAHY*

It is common knowledge that in the seventy or so places where the word *wahy* (in its different forms) occurs in the Qur'ân it bears a wide variety of senses depending on the context and the subject matter. This is only natural;

1. *Ibid.*

for in every language there are certain words each of which is used in a multiplicity of senses, sometimes even one directly opposite to the other, in accordance with the situations and contexts. In the case of such a word it is neither easy nor perhaps desirable to find a fixed meaning or set of meanings that would fit in with its use in all the occasions and situations. Bell has attempted to do something like that with regard to the term *waḥy*. He refers to some Qur'ânic passages where the therm occurs, such as *waḥy* to the bee, *waḥy* of one satan to another, *waḥy* to the earth, etc., and then says that in view of these instances the correct English rendering for the term should be "suggestion", "prompting" or "inspiration".

To anyone who has a knowledge of the Qur'ân it should be obvious that Bell's survey of the Qur'ânic use of the word is not at all comprehensive, nor even objective. He has selected only such passages as would support his point of view that the word does not mean verbal communication of a text; for that is what he confessedly intends to "avoid" even where that sense is the "natural" one. Even then, the meanings he puts on the expression do not appear to be adequate or appropriate in respect of all the instances he has cited. Thus, in the instances of *waḥy* to the Prophets for what he calls practical lines of conduct the meaning of the term should be, as pointed out earlier, command or directive and not simply suggestion or prompting as such. Again, the *'iqra'* passage where of course the expression *waḥy* does not occur but which Bell himself acknowledges to be part of the Qur'ânic *waḥy*, is a command, and not suggestion. More specifically, the *waḥy* to be given to the earth on the doomsday will not be a suggestion or prompting. Bell in fact commits a mistake in saying that the earth would be prompted to give up its dead — the meaning of the *'âyahs* (99:4-5) is: "On that day she shall speak out her affairs, because your Lord will *waḥy* her." Clearly the sense here is that God will command the earth, together with giving her the speaking power, to speak out her affairs. *Waḥy* here bears this dual sense; for everyone knows that the earth as it is now has no speaking power, and no simple suggestion or promting will make her speak. To give just one instance outside Bell's survey. "That is some of the tidings of things unseen which We *waḥy* to you", so runs 3:44 ﴿ذٰلك من أنباء الغيب نوحيه إليك...﴾.[1] Here the term *waḥy* clearly means the communication of some facts or information —some statements regarding some unseen (unknown) affair, and not at all suggestion or

1. See also Q.12:102.

inspiration about some unknown affair. Thus the meanings suggested by Bell do not appropriately and adequately convey the sense of the expression even in respect of the instances he has cited. If indeed a common English equivalent for *waḥy* must needs be found out, it should be "communication", rather than suggestion, prompting, etc. This meaning would fit in all the situations.

Since the word *waḥy* is used in various senses in connection with different subjects and situations the proper course in understanding the sense of the term in relation to any particular subject is to examine the uses that are made of it in connection only with that subject. It is on that basis that in Islamic religious parlance the term *waḥy* is applied only to God's communications to His Prophets and Messengers. In other words, the *technical* meaning of *waḥy*, apart from its general meanings, is God's communications to His Prophets. And just like the English word 'communication', *waḥy* means both the act or process of communicating (i.e. as verb) and also that which is communicated (i.e. the subject-matter). As such *waḥy* may be of various types in accordance with the manners or processes of its communication, as well as in accordance with the nature of the subject matter.

The passage 42:51 noticed above speaks about the manners or processes of the coming of *waḥy* to the Prophets. The *'âyah* mentions three ways in which God's words are made to reach His chosen man, namely, (a) by means of *waḥy*, (b) from behind the veil and (c) by sending a messenger (the angel Jibrîl) who "by His order communicates (*yûḥî*) what He wills". It may be observed that the nature of the first category is not further elaborated here. Obviously it includes all the various processes besides the other two. The Prophet's statement that sometimes *waḥy* used to come to him like the reverberation of a bell and that this was the manner which was the hardest on him,[1] may be considered as of the first category. An example of the second category is the famous incident of God's speaking to Mûsâ while remaining unseen. The third type is self-explanatory and is mentioned also in the New Testament.

Similarly *waḥy* may be of different types depending on the nature of the matter communicated. And of such various types according to subject-matter only one particular type of *waḥy* forms the scripture, the Book or Recitation (Qur'ân). Thus when Mûsâ was commanded to follow what is called a prac-

1. *Bukhârî*, no.2.

tical line of conduct, such as striking the rock with his staff, that was of course *waḥy*, but not the *Torah*. Only that which was specifically communicated as *Torah* was *Torah*. Likewise, of the various types of *waḥy* made to Muḥammad (ﷺ) only that which was communicated as Qur'ân is Qur'ân. And only this type is to be called the Qur'ânic *waḥy*. Hence, while each and every word of the Qur'ân is undoubtedly *waḥy*, each and every *waḥy* to Muḥammad (ﷺ) is not the Qur'ân. There are many examples of non-Qur'ânic *waḥy* to him, such as *ḥadîth qudsî*, the information given him in dream about the nature of the place of his migration, etc.

It should be clear from the above that to understand the nature of Qur'ânic *waḥy* it is necessary to concentrate our attention only upon such passages of the Qur'ân as speak of its communication to the Prophet, and not upon all the passages where the term *waḥy* occurs in its general senses. If we do so, it would be seen that there are a number of such passages which, while speaking about the delivery of the Qur'ân to the Prophet, also use the specific term *waḥy*. There are, however, a large number of other passages which very much speak about the coming of the Qur'ân to the Prophet but which do not employ the term *waḥy*. In fact it is this latter group of passges that contain more significant expressions elucidating the nature of Qur'ânic *waḥy*.

There are some forty passages in the Qur'ân wherein the term *waḥy* occurs in connection with its coming to the Prophet. While in the majority of such passages there is no particular indication of the nature of Qur'ânic *waḥy*, there are at least a dozen of them that contain expressions explaining its nature. An examinotion of these passages yields the following:

(1) *The Qur'ânic waḥy itself, and not anything else, which is to be recited / read out.*

﴿ كذلك أرسلناك في أمة قد خلت من قبلها أمم لتتلوا عليهم الذى أوحينا إليك ... ﴾ (١٣ : ٣٠)

"Thus have We sent you (as Messenger) among a people before whom (other) peoples have passed away, in order that you recite unto them that which We have *waḥy*-ied to you." (13:30)

Here the clear implication is, it is that type of *waḥy* which is to be read out. That means it is in the form of a readable text and not simply a suggestion which is to be worked out and presented in the form of a reading material. And it is precisely because this type of *waḥy* is to be recited and read out, its other name is Qur'ân, the Reading or Recitation.

(2) *It is a Scripture (Book) which is waḥy-ied and which is to be recited.*

﴿ واتلُ ما أوحيَ إليك من كتاب ربك لا مبدّل لكلمــته... ﴾ (١٨ : ٢٧)

"And recite what I *waḥy* to you of the Book of your Lord. None can change His words..." (18:27)

﴿ اتل ما أوحيَ إليك من الكتــب... ﴾ (٢٩ : ٤٥)

"Recite what I *waḥy* to you of the Book..." (29: 45)

﴿ والذى أوحينا إليك من الكتــب هو الحق.... ﴾ (٣٥ : ٣١)

"And that which I have *waḥy*-ied to you of the Book is the truth" (35:31).

Thus what was communicated (*waḥy*-ied) to the Prophet was a Book, not that it was suggested to him to produce a book. It is also noteworthy that the first passage in this series speaks of the Qur'ânic *waḥy* as God's "words" (*kalimâtihi* كلمــته), emphasizing that there is none to change His words.

(3) *That which was waḥy-ied is a "Recitation - Qur'ân" and in a specific language.*

﴿ وكذلك أوحينا إليك قرءانا عربيا... ﴾ (٤٢ : ٧)

"Thus have We *waḥy*-ied to you a Qur'ân (Recitation) in Arabic". (42:7).[1]

Thus a "Recitation" had been *waḥy*-ied to the Prophet; not that he was *waḥy*-ied to produce a recitation.

(4) That the Prophet was first to listen to what was being *waḥy*-ied to him, and not to hasten to repeating/reciting it, before the completion of its communication.

﴿ ...ولا تعجل بالقرءان من قبل أن يقضــىٰ إليك وحيه... ﴾ (٢٠ : ١١٤)

"And be not in haste with the Qur'ân (Recitation) before its *waḥy*-ing is completed." (20:114)

(5) That the Qur'ânic *waḥy*, and not simply the Qur'ân as such, consists of narrations/accounts.

﴿ نحن نقص عليك أحســن القصص بما أوحينا إليك هــذا القرءان... ﴾ (١٢ : ٣)

"We narrate unto you the best of narratives as We *waḥy* to you this Qur'ân." (12:3)

Here "the best of narratives" is a description of the *waḥy* which is communicated as Qur'ân. Indeed the expressions *naquṣṣu* (We narrate) and *'awḥaynâ* (We *waḥy*) in the passage are more or less coterminous.

(6) To the same effect are the passages that say that the Qur'ânic *waḥy* itself, and not simply the Qur'ân as such, consists of tidings/reports of events and affairs.

1. The same fact is stressed at another place where the term *'anjalnâ* (أنزلنا) instead of *'awḥaynâ* (أوحينا) is used. See Q.12:2.

﴿تلك من أنباء الغيب نوحيها إليك...﴾ (١١: ٤٩)

"Those are of the tidings of the unseen that We *waḥy* to you"...(11:49)

﴿ذلك من أنباء الغيب نوحيه إليك ...﴾ (١٢: ١٠٢)

"That is one of the tidings of the unseen which We *waḥy* to you." (12:102)

(7) Last but not least, it is specifically stressed that the Qur'ân is no composition of the Prophet himself and that nothing could be a graver sin on his part than to give out as God's words that which was not actually communicated to him as such.

﴿ومن أظلم ممن افترى على الله كذبا أو قال أُوحِيَ إليَّ ولم يُوحَ إليه شيء ومن قال سأنزل مثل ما أنزل الله...﴾ (٦: ٩٣)

"And who could be a worse transgressor than the one who forges a lie against Allah or claims: 'It has been *waḥy*-ied to me,' while nothing has been *waḥy*-ied to him, and the one who says: 'I shall bring down the like of what Allah has sent down'?" (6:93).

In the passages cited above it is a description of the Qur'ânic *waḥy* itself that (a) it is some specific text which is to be recited; (b) that it is the Book which is communicated and which is Allah's words (*kalimâtihi*); (c) that it is communicated in Arabic language; (d) that the Prophet is to listen to it carefully before hastening to repeat it; (e) that sometimes it consists of "narratives" and "reports" and (f) that it is no composition of the Prophet himself and that nothing could be a graver sin on his part than to compose a text and then give it out as one from Allah. All these facts unmistakably emphasize textual and verbal communication and not at all the communication of ideas or thoughts nor what might be called "suggestion," "prompting", "inspiration", "intuition", etc.

These facts are drawn only from such passages as contain the term *waḥy* (in its various forms) in connection with the communication of the Qur'ân to the Prophet. These are, however, very strongly supplemented and corroborated by a far larger number of passages dealing with the same subject but not using the term *waḥy* and showing clearly that the Qur'ân was delivered to the Prophet verbatim and in the form of specific texts. These passages will be conisdered a little later on in connection with the discussion on the views of Watt who, it will be seen, attempts in his own way merely to substatntiate the views of Bell.[1] It should be clear from the above, however, that Bell's confusion and mistake clearly arise from: (a) his having concentrated his attention on the general use of the term in the Qur'ân; (b) his

1. *Infra*, pp. 503-512.

having failed to notice that the meanings he has suggested do not properly convey the sense of the expression even in the cases he has cited (e.g. *waḥy* to the earth); (c) his having made no distinction between the general sense and technical sense of the term; (d) his not having recognized the distinction between the Qur'ânic *waḥy* on the one hand and the other types of *waḥy* to the Prophet on the other; (e) his not having taken proper account of even those passages that use the term *waḥy* in speaking about the transmission of the Qur'ân to the Prophet, and, finally, (f) his not having at all taken into consideration the vast number of passages that deal with the same subject without using the term *waḥy* but employing a number of other expressions that very clearly and unequivocally elucidate the nature of Qur'ânic *waḥy*. In fine, it may once again be pointed out that one is of course free to believe or not to believe that the Qur'ân is God's words; but if one attempts to pronounce a judgement on its nature on the basis of the Qur'ânic evidence, one must take into account the whole range of its evidences and should not simply satisfy himself with those that are not quite to the point and, further, should not twist or misinterpret, instead of admitting, the "natural" sense of any expresseion or statement.

V. BELL'S THEORY ABOUT THE VISION OF GOD

As regards Bell's assumption that in the passage 53:1-18 (*sûrat al-Najm*) the Prophet initially claimed to have seen Allah, it is an elaboration of Margoliouth's assumption and is based totally upon a wrong interpretation of the passage. The meaning and implications of the passage have been noted earlier.[1] Here Bell's arguments and observations are taken into consideration.

Bell translates *'âyah* 4 of the passage ﴿علّمه شديد القوى﴾ as: "There taught him (or it) one strong in power." The plain translation of the passage should be: "One strong in power taught him." There is nothing in the *'ayah* to warrant the insertion of the word "there" at the beginning of the sentence; for the description of what he calls the "vision" comes after two more *'âyahs*, i.e., in *'âyahs* 7-9. Bell's main argument, however, centres round *'âyah* 10 of the passage ﴿فأوحىٰ إلى عبده ما أوحىٰ﴾. He rejects what he calls the Muslim commentators' view that the subject of the verb *'awḥâ* is Jibrîl while the pronoun in *'abdihi* is Allah, saying that it is an "unnatural use of language". He admits that Allah is indeed the pronoun in *'abdihi* and then says that "this involves that Allah is also the subject of the verb and in fact is being spoken

1. *Supra*, pp. 418-422.

of all through."[1]

It needs only to be pointed out here that unlike in English, in Arabic pronouns do not always relate to the immediate antecedent, nor is the same subject assumed in the cases of all the verbs in a single sentence. Instances of such use of pronouns are abundant even in modern Arabic. Even in English this particular grammatical rule is not always strictly observed and the meaning of an expression can be properly understood only with reference to the context and with a background knowledge of the facts.[2] So far as Arabic is concerned, however, there would be no "unnatural use of language" if there is one pronoun for the verb *'awḥâ* in the *'âyah* in question and another pronoun for the expression *'abdihi* in it.

In fact the nature of the entity spoken of should be understood primarily on the basis of its description in *'âyahs* 5-9, and not so much on the basis of *'âyah* 10 alone. It is described in *'ayahs* 5-6 as "one strong in power" and "endowed with wisdom (or mental and physical fitness". Bell himself acknowledges that the term *mirrah* in *'âyah* 6 is taken to mean fitness either of figure or of intellect.[3] As explained earlier,[4] these adjectievs are clearly relative in nature. By no stretch of the imagination could they be taken as attributes of God. Nowhere in the Qur'ân is God described in such terms and by such attributes. On the other hand angels are described, among others, by the adjective *shadîd* and its plural *shidâd*.[5] Thus even if the traditions on the subject are not brought to bear on the passage, its internal evidence decisively militates against any assumption that the entity spoken of is God. On the contrary, keeping the descriptive phrases in mind and relating this description to *'âyah* 18 of the same *sûrah* which speaks of what is seen as "one of the greatest signs of his Lord", and not the Lord Himself, the unavoidable meaning is that the entity spoken of is the angel. This is further clear from the Qur'ânic passage 81:19-27 which, as shown earlier,[6] should

1. *M.W.*, 1934, pp. 148-149.

2. See for instance this statement: "Perhaps his [Al-Zubayr's] relationship to Khadîjah through his father and to Muḥammad through his mother made conversion easy". (Watt, *M. at M.*, 92). One not knowing the facts might take the last "his" in the sentence to refer to Muḥammad (p.b.h.) and the "mother" spoken of to be his rather than Al-Zubayr's, which is what is meant here.

3. *M.W.*,1934, p. 145, n. 4.

4. *Supra*, pp. 420-421.

5. See Q. 66:6 and 72:8.

6. *Supra*, pp. 419-420.

be taken into consideration in this connection and which speaks of the entity as a "noble messenger", besides describing him as one "possessing power" ﴿ذى قوة﴾. Bell of course suggests that *'âyah* 18 of *sûrat al-Najm,* the passage 81:19-27 and the angel Jibril are all subsequent introductions. But the grounds on which these assumptions are made, as will be seen presently, are all untenable.

Bell seeks to support his assumption by suggesting that the Prophet, having claimed that he had seen Allah, subsequently realized the mistake and also faced objections to it. As evidence of this supposed "uneasiness" and "objections" Bell cites 17:60 [62] which reads, in Bell's translation: "We appointed the vision which We showed thee simply as a test for the people."[1] Bell argues that this *'âyah* refers not to *isrâ'* and *mi'râj* alluded to in 17:1, as the Muslim commentators hold, but to the "vision" narrated in *sûrat al-Najm*; for, according to him, *'âyah* 17:1 does not speak of any "vision".[2] This argument of Bell's is, however, not at all tenable; for 17:1 *does* speak of a vision and also qualifies it as a vision of some of the "signs" of Allah — لنريه من ءايـتنا — "in order that We might show him some of Our signs." Thus the very argument on which Bell builds up his assumption of "uneasiness" and "objections" about the "vision" in *sûrat al-Najm* is wrong.

Proceeding on the basis of these two faulty assumptions, namely, that in *sûrat al-Najm* the Prophet first claimed to have seen Allah and that there was "uneasiness" and "objections" about that claim, Bell suggests that the Prophet therefore subsequently modified his position; and this modification is noticeable in *'âyahs* 11-18 of the *sûrah*. Bell translates its *'âyah* 11 — ما كذب الفؤاد ما رأى — as: "The heart did not falsify what it saw", and says that the Prophet thus attempted to give the impression of a "spiritual appearance".[3]

Here again Bell makes a mistake about the pronouns. The pronoun implicit in the verb *mâ ra'a* ﴿ما رأى﴾ is the Prophet, not "it", i.e., the heart; for the simple reason that it does not really make sense to say that the heart did not falsify, i.e., invent the vision, if the intention was to stress that it was only a mental vision. On the contrary, since the "vision" was very much corporeal it was emphasized that the heart did not "falsify" it, i.e., it was no mis-

1. The text runs thus: ﴿وما جعلنا الرؤيا التى أرينـك إلا فتنة للناس...﴾
2. *M.W.*,1934, p.151.
3. *Ibid.*

taken impression, no mere imagination, no hallucination on his part about what he saw. Far from mystifying the "vision", the statement here only emphasizes the reality of the experience. The pronoun in *mâ ra'a* is thus the Prophet. That the experience was one of physical sight is indicated again in *'âyah* 13 which speaks of its happening at another "descent" and, further, in *'âyah* 17 which specifically mentions *baṣar*, i.e., eye, as the instrument of the sight. Had the intention been to mystify and modify, neither the expression "another descent" nor *baṣar* would have been mentioned in connection with this so-called modifying statements. The alleged modification is totally groundless and the *'âyahs* 13, 17 and 18 do not at all modify anything.

Moreover, as already pointed out, the passage 53: 1- 18 should be interpreted in conjunction with 81:19-27 (*sûrat al-Takwîr*) which speaks of an "honourable messenger", i.e., an angel, as the conveyer of *waḥy*.[1] Bell suggests that this passage should not be allowed to influence the interpretation of 53:1-18. His reasons for this suggestion are: (a) that it is not until the Medinan period that Jibrîl is mentioned in this connection and (b) that when the Makkan unbelievers raised the objection, in Bell's words, "that an angel should have been sent as messenger or that at least an angel should have been conjoined with him", the Prophet's reply was "not that an angel was actually conveying the message to him, but simply that all former messengers had been men, xvi: 45, or that if an angel had been sent, that would have been the end of the matter, and there would have been no respite, vi; 8".[2] Bell further states that the "whole new world" of angels "opened up" to the Prophet much subsequently, —"note the phrase in xxv:1, 'He addeth in the creation what He pleaseth" as indicating possibly that the creatures there spoken of were new to Muḥammad".[3] Thus arguing Bell concludes that "the angel messenger of surah lxxxi must be later than the description of the visions in surah liii, and should not be allowed to influence its interpretation".[4]

Now, Bell is very much wrong in all his assumptions here, namely, (a) that the Prophet became aware of the existence of angels at a later date than that of his utterance of *sûrat al-Najm*; (b) the assumption about the nature of

1. *Supra*, pp.419-420.
2. *M.W.* 1934, p.149.
3. *Ibid.*,154.
4. *Ibid.*,150.

the Makkan unbelievers' demand for an angel messenger and (c) the assumption that Jibrîl was mentioned as the conveyer of *waḥy* only at Madina.

As regards the first assumption, it is decisively disproved by the very argument which Bell himself adduces to support his thesis. The fact that the Makkans asked for an angel messenger or an angel coadjutor with the Prophet shows that the Makkan unbelievers, not to speak of the Prophet himself, were very much aware of the existence of angels. In fact at three places in *sûrat al-Najm* itself the Prophet is found attempting, so to say, to correct the unbelievers' misconception about angels. Thus *'âyah* 21 points out their mistake in thinking that angels are God's daughters.[1] *'Âyah* 26 says that there are indeed many angels in the heaven but their intercession would be of no avail to anyone except with God's leave and pleasure;[2] and *'âyah* 27 states that "those who believe not in the hereafter name the angels with female names.[3] There are a large number of early Makkan passages in the Qur'ân showing that knowledge about the existence of angels had been fairly common in Arabia, particularly at Makka, since pre-Islamic times".[4] Hence nothing could be farther from the truth and more misleading than the assertion that the existence of angels dawned on Muḥammad (ﷺ) at a later stage of his career.

Similarly Bell misconstrues the passages 16:45 and 6:8 which relate to the unbelievers' demand for an angel to be sent as messenger to them and the replies given to that demand. It should be noted that these two are not the only passages in the Qur'ân dealing with the matter. There are at least ten more such passages relating to it.[5] These passages do in no way suggest that the Prophet was avoiding the question whether there were angels or not, nor whether an angel had brought to him God's word. A cursory glance at these passages would make it unmistakably clear that the unbelievers' demand arose out of a two-fold attitude on their part. They refused to believe that a human being like themselves could have been a messenger of God. They also sought to discredit the Prophet by saying in effect that if indeed an angel

1. The text runs as follows: ﴿ألكم الذكر وله الأنثى﴾
2. The text runs as follows:
﴿وكم من ملك في السمـوٰت لا تغني شفـعتهم شيئا إلا من بعد أن يأذن الله لمن يشاء ويرضىٰ﴾
3. The text runs as follows: ﴿إن الذين لا يؤمنون بالأخرة ليسمون الملـئكة تسمية الأنثى﴾
4. See for instance Q. 69:17; 70:4; 74:31; 89:22 and 97;4 out of some fifty such passages.
5. See for instance Q. 6:111; 6:158; 15:7-8; 16:33; 17:95; 23:24; 25:7; 25:21-22; 41:14; 43:53.

had delivered God's word to him, why was not an angel sent to them instead as His messenger or at least as a co-warner with Muḥammad (ﷺ). It may also be noted that the Makkan unbelievers could not by themselves have conceived the idea of an angel messenger being sent to them. For, hitherto they only imagined that angels were God's daughters and that their primary function, as God's favoured ones, was to intercede with Him on behalf of human beings. The idea that an angel could be sent as God's messenger therefore appears to have dawned on them only when the Prophet had made the claim that an angel had actually delivered to him God's word. At any rate, their demand was clearly a counter-claim arising out of what the Prophet had asserted.

The nature of the unbelievers' objection and challenge may be gleaned from 25:7 (*sûrat al-Furqân*) and 15: 6-7 (*sûrat al-Ḥijr*). They run respectively as follows:

﴿وقالوا مالِ هـٰذا الرسول يأكل الطعام ويمشي في الأسواق لولا أنزل إليه ملك فيكون معه نذيرا﴾ (٢٥ : ٧)

"And they say: 'What sort of a messenger is this, who eats food and walks in the markets? Why has not an angel been sent down to him to be a warner along with him?'" (25:7)

﴿وقالوا يـٰأيها الذى نزل عليه الذكر إنك لمجنون (٦) لو ما تأتينا بالملـٰئكة إن كنت من الصـٰدقين (٧)﴾
(١٥ : ٦- ٧)

"And they say: 'O the one on whom the text has been sent down! Truly you are mad. Why not bring to us the angels, if you are of the truthful?'" (15:6-7)

While the first passage shows that the unbelievers could not persuade themselves that a human being could be God's messenger, the second passage illustrates the retorting nature of their demand. The form of the unbelievers' address in the second passage, "O the one on whom the text has been sent down", is very significant. It in no way suggests that they believed in it. It is only a taunting repetition of what they were told, namely, that God's word had been "sent down" to him.[1] The phrase *nuzzila* (نزّل), "has been sent down", implies that some intermediary had been mentioned as the conveyer of the text. This is further clear from the succeeding *'âyah*, 15:7, which demands of the Prophet to produce the angels if he was "truthful", that is, if he had spoken the truth in stating that an angel had delivered to him the divine text. The form of the Prophet's claim is discernible from the nature of

1. See also 38:8 which says: ﴿أءنزل عليه الذكر...﴾ -"What! has the récit been sent down to him?"

the retort. Surely the unbelievers would not have asked for the angels to be produced before them if the Prophet had stated to them that he had receieved the text directly from God. Thus the very question which Bell raises and the Qur'ânic passages relating to them decisively disprove both the assumptions that the Prophet had initially claimed to have received the text directly from God and that he became aware of the existence of angels only at a subsequent stage of his career.

Again, while noticing two of the replies given to the unbelievers' demand, Bell does not mention the other very pertinent reply stated in the *'âyah* immediately following the one he cites, namely, 6:9. It is pointed out there that were an angel sent to them he would still have been sent in the form of a man and in that case they would have been in no less confusion. The folly in their demand is further pointed out in 17:95 where it is stated that had the earth been inhabited by angels walking about there in peace and quietness, certainly an angel would have been sent as a messenger. In all these passages the objection which is being combated is not whether angels did exist or not but, if an angel did really deliver God's word to Muḥammad (ﷺ), why did one not physically appear before them as God's messenger or at least as co-messenger with him. In other words, why did Muḥammad (ﷺ) not ask the angel to come up to vouchsafe for him before his people?

Thus the suggestion that the Prophet had initially claimed to have seen Allah because he was unaware of the existence of angels at that stage and because the passage 53:1-18 contains indications of such a "vision" and its subsequent "modifications" is totally unwarranted and untenable. Before leaving this particular assumption, however, one more item of Bell's reasonings may be noted. While maintaining that the traditions regarding the coming of *waḥy* are later inventions Bell at the same time does not refrain from invoking Jâbir ibn 'Abd Allah's report on the subject given in *Bukhârî*[1] to support his assumption. He says that Jâbir's report implies "that the vision was one of Allah", adding that as it is "contrary to orthodox sentiment", it "must have come into existence before orthodox tradition was fixed".[2] Bell says so on the basis of the expression (فإذا هو جالس على كرسي) occurring in the report. He translates this expression as: "and there He was sitting upon the Throne", and argues that the "throne" is "appropriate" to Allah.[3]

1. *Bukhârî*, nos. 4992-4995.
2. *M.W.*, 1934, 17-18.
3. *Ibid.*

Now, it needs to be pointed out only that the word *kursî* (كرسي) is in the indefinite form in the report in question, meaning "a chair", and not in the definite form meaning "the chair", as Bell mistranslates it. There is thus no question of its being exclusively "appropriate" to Allah. It may further be noted that in two of the versions of the same report in *Bukhârî* (i.e., nos. 4994 and 4995) it is specifically mentioned that the entity seen was "the very angel who had come to me at Ḥirâ'" (فإذا الملك الذي جاءني بحراء). Bell is of course aware of this fact; but he attempts to explain it away by saying that Jibrîl was imported into the story fairly early".[1] This is an unwarranted statement. He does not even explain what he means by "fairly early". Does he mean to say that it happened before this specific version of Jâbir's report came into existence? But even that would not resolve all the difficulty. For Jâbir was an *anṣârî* (helper, d. 74 H.) and came into contact with the Prophet after his migration to Madina. Jâbir also specifically states that he received his information from the Prophet himself. Now, as Bell says that the Prophet had modified his initial account of the "vision" in view of the objections to it, and that obviously at Makka, he could not have given an impression of having seen Allah to Jâbir. In fact none of the versions of Jâbir's report implies that the "vision" was one of Allah. Also Bell's statements that the so-called "orthodox tradition" had been formed after Jâbir's report had come into existence and that Jibrîl was introduced "fairly early" in the story are somewhat self-contradicttory and confusing; for according to Bell's own assumption the Prophet had supposedly modified his position before the migration. Hence there was no question of the so-called "orthodox" tradition having been formed subsequently to the coming into existence of Jâbir's account. All the four forms of Jâbir's report, taken together, clearly show that the entity seen was the angel Jibrîl, not Allah.

VI. THE ASSUMPTION ABOUT JIBRÎL

Bell's fifth assumption, namely, that the passage 81:19-27 which speaks of a "noble messenger" as the conveyer of *waḥy* was given out by the Prophet at a later stage of his career and therefore it should not be allowed to influence the interpretation of 53:1-18, has already been shown to be wrong; for the two props on which this assumption is made to stand, namely, that the Prophet was not initially aware of the existence of angels and that he avoided telling the unbelievers that an angel had delivered to him God's words are

1. *Ibid.*,18.

totally wrong. The passage 81:19-27 should therefore be brought into consideration in interpreting the passage 52:1-18.

This brings us to the last item in the series of Bell's assumptions, namely, that Jibrîl was introduced as the conveyer of *waḥy* only at Madina. Now, it has been seen:

(i) that angels had been known to the Prophet and his contemporaries at Makka at least since the beginning of his mission;

(ii) that they were spoken of as messengers between God and His Prophet;

(iii) that it was specifically stated at Makka that a "noble messenger" had brought the revealed text to the Prophet;

(iv) that it was because of this calim that the Makkan unbelievers came forward with the counter-claim that an angel should have been sent as a messenger or joined as co-messenger with Muḥammad (ﷺ);

(v) that the traditions relating to the coming of *waḥy* and specifically mentioning the angel Jibîl as its conveyer are not later fabrications, as Bell supposes; and

(vi) that even the Christians at Makka and elsewhere in Arabia believed and knew that Jibrîl was the angel who conveyed God's revelation to His Prophets.

In view of all these proven facts it is just not reasonable to suppose that Jibrîl came to be known to the Prophet only after he had come over to Madina.

True, Jibrîl is mentioned by that very name only three times in the Qur'ân and all these are Madinan passages, namely, 2:97; 2:98 and 66:4. Of these, it is only in 2:97 where that angel is spoken of as the conveyer of *waḥy*. The wording of the passage clearly shows that it is a reply to objections raised about Jibrîl in some quarters and that some talk about him had already been going on before this *'âyah* was given out. In fact all the reports regarding the occasion of revelation of this passage agree in stating that when the Jews at Madina came to know that the Prophet maintained that the angel Jibrîl brought revelations to him they expressed their antipathy towards that angel and said that had the Prophet said that the angel Mikhael was the conveyer of *waḥy* they would have followed him (the Prophet). Thereupon this passage was given in reply to their objection.[1] The passage itself and its context as

1. See for instance Al-Ṭabarî, *Tafsîr*, II, 36 and Ibn Kathîr, *Tafsîr*, I, 185-191.

known from the reports do not in any way indicate that Jibrîl was being spoken of here for the first time as the conveyer of revelations.

Moreover, the fact that Jibrîl is spoken of by that very name in the Madinan passages only does not mean that there is no reference to him in the Makkan *sûrahs*. In fact the expressions *rasûl karîm* (a noble messenger) in 81:19 and *shadîd al-quwâ* (one strong in power) in 53:3 are taken by all commentators to mean the angel Jibrîl. It would even seem that the expression *shadîd al-quwâ* and the term Jibrîl are coterminous; for, according to one authority, Jibrîl is a compound word made up of *Jabr* and *Il*, meaning a "brave one of God" or "servant of God". *Jabr* in Hebrew is *Geber* which means "a servant", and *Il* means "the mighty", "the powerful".[1] Also the expressions *Rûḥ al-Quds* (the spirit of holiness)[2] in 16:102 and *Al-Rûḥ al-'Amîn* (the trustworthy spirit) in 26:193 are unanimously taken by the commentators to refer to Jibrîl. It may also be noted that the term *Nâmûs* occurring in the tradition means the trusted or the confidential angel.[3] Thus both the Qur'ân and the traditions, which should not be kept out of consideration, show that Jibrîl was mentioned as the conveyer of revelations from the very beginning of the Prophet's mission.

1. William Geseneus, *Hebrew-English Lexicon*, cited in Malik Ghulam Farid, *The Holy Qur'ân English Translation and Commentary*, Rabwah (Pakistan), 1969, p.46, n.123.

2. Not 'Holy Spirit'; for the construction is *muḍâf-muḍâf-'ilayhi*, not *ṣifat-mawṣûf*.

3. See the term *Nâmûs* in *Lisân al-'Arab*.

CHAPTER XIX

WAḤY AND THE ORIENTALISTS: III. WATT'S TREATMENT OF AL-ZUHRÎ'S REPORT

Watt takes over from his predecessors, particularly from Margoliouth and Bell, and attempts to support mainly their assumptions. Thus he reiterates (a) that the Prophet had initially claimed to have seen Allah; (b) that Jibrîl was introduced at a later stage as the conveyer of *waḥy*; (c) that *waḥy* does not mean verbal communication of a text, but "suggestion" or "inspiration" to follow a practical line of conduct or to give out the Qur'ân and (d) that the Qur'ânic *waḥy* is in some form or other part of Muḥammad's (ﷺ) consciousness.

In reproducing his predecessors' views, however, Watt does not always recite their premises and grounds. Hence his statements sometimes appear to be mere assertions. These would be better understood, however, by those who are conversant with his predecessors' writings, especially those of Margoliouth and Bell. But though Watt reproduces mainly their views, he does not always follow them in his use of the sources. Thus, while Bell would totally discount the traditions concerning the coming of *waḥy* as fabrications of a later age and would not take them into consideration in this connection, Watt would not do so. He would rather try to support the Margoliouth-Bell assumption by having recourse to both the Qur'ân and the traditions. In doing so, however, he would select only such traditions as he thinks support his views. In such a case he would not go into the question of the authenticity of the particular tradition and would simply dispose of the matter by observing that not much is to be gained by discussing the *isnâd*. Even then he would not abide by the information supplied by his chosen piece of the report as a whole but would accept only those parts of it as suit his purpose and would reject the other parts as of doubtful validity. He also advances some further arguments, not quite his own, to support the Margoliouth-Bell theory. Thus he uses the expressions *al-rûḥ* and *al-ḥaq*, mentioned in the Qur'ân and traditions in connection with the coming of *waḥy*, and interprets them as being coterminous with God. Again, while Margoliouth uses the writing of Podmore, Watt has recourse to that of A.Poulain to provide a psychological/mystical explanation of the phenomena of *waḥy*.

Another remarkable feature of Watt's approach is that unlike his predecessors he makes a specific claim to impartiality in theological matters and to academic objectivity. He even castigates the previous European writers in general for their lack of sympathetic understanding of Islam and its Prophet. Such declarations of impartiality and neutrality, besides being uncalled for, are sharply at odds with the practical line of approach he adopts, for he in fact and essence reiterates mainly his predecessors' views and assumptions, and that too with no discernible degree of greater sympathy towards Islam and the Prophet.

I. AL-ZUHRÎ'S REPORT

Watt starts his discussion on the coming of *waḥy* by quoting what he calls Al-Zuhrî's report. This report, it may be mentioned, is in fact 'Â'ishah's report coming through Al-Zuhrî and reproduced in various works, with some variations in the text. We have already dealt with this report as given in *Bukhârî* as well as in *Al-Ṭabarî*, noting the reasons why Al-Ṭabarî's version cannot be preferred to that in *Bukhârî*.[1] Watt, however, prefers Al-Ṭabarî's version saying that it "has not been rewritten, as has Ibn Hishâm's version".[2] He does not mention Bukhârî at all in this connection though, it is to be noted, that Bukhârî's work is earlier than Al-Ṭabarî's. In the latter work Al-Zuhrî's report consists of some three paragraphs, the first two being a continuous account and the third being in the nature of an independent report reproduced by Al-Ṭabarî a couple of pages subsequent to the first two paragraphs. Watt reproduces this text in his own translation. In doing so, however, he breaks the three paragraphs into as many as 12 "passages", which he numbers alphabetically from A to L, stating that this has been done "for convenience" and that the divisions "come at breaks in az-Zuhrî's material, as indicated by the change of narrator".[3] In order to enable the reader the better to understand Watt's treatment we reproduce in the footnote Al-Ṭabarî's text in Arabic, indicating in square brackets the portions that are broken by Watt into 12 "passages" respectively from A to L.[4]

1. *Supra*, pp. 369-75, 380-386.
2. Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, p.40.
3. *Ibid.*
4. The Arabic text runs as follows:

[فحدثني أحمد بن عثمان المعروف بأبي الجوزاء، قال: حدثنا وهب بن جرير، قال: حدثنا أبي، قال: سمعتُ النُّعمان بن راشد، يحدث عن الزهري، عن عُروة، عن عائشة أنها قالت: كان أول ما ابتدئ به رسول الله ﷺ من الوحي الرؤيا الصادقة، كانت تجيء مثل فلق الصبح،]
[ثم حُبِّب إليه الخلاء، فكان بغار بحراء يتحنّث فيه الليالي ذوات العدد قبل أن يرجع إلى أهله، ثم يرجع إلى أهله، فيتزود لمثلها؛ حتى فجأه =

The following is how Watt reproduces in his own translation Al-Ṭabarî's version of Al-Zuhrî's report.

A.. In this passage Watt places the first part of 'Â'ishah's report which says that the beginning of revelation was *al-ru'yâ al-ṣâdiqah*, which he translates as "true vision". "It used to come like the breaking of dawn".

B. In the second passage Watt places the portion which immediately follows the above and which says that afterwards solitude became dear to the Prophet and he went to Ḥirâ' for *taḥannuth*, ending with the statement: "At length, unexpectedly, the Truth came to him and said, O Muḥammad, thou art the Messenger of God".

C. In the third passage Watt puts the portion wherein the Messenger of Allah says he had been standing but fell on his knees, then he went to Khadîjah (r.a.) and asked her to cover him, which was done, until the terror left him; ending with: "Then he came to me and said, O Muḥammad, thou art the Messenger of God".

D. In the fourth passage is placed that part wherein the Messenger of Allah is stated to have said that he had been meditating throwing himself from a mountain crag, but while he was so meditating, "he appeared to me and said, O Muḥammad, I am Gabriel, and thou art the Messenger of God".

E. In the fifth passage is placed the part which narrates the angel's saying to the Messenger of Allah: "Recite", and the latter's replying: "I cannot recite (or "what shall I recite")"; then the angel's having squeezed him thrice and then saying: "Recite in the name of thy Lord who created. And I recited".

F. In the sixth passage is placed the portion of the report which speaks of the Mes-

= الحقّ، فأتاه، فقال: يا محمد، أنتَ رسول الله؛] قال رسول الله ﷺ: فجثوتُ لركبتي وأنا قائم، ثم زحفتُ ترجُفُ بوادري، ثم دخلت على خديجة، فقلت: زمِّلوني، زمِّلوني، زمِّلوني؛ حتى ذهب عني الرَّوْع، ثم أتاني فقال: يا محمَّد، أنت رسولُ الله]. [قال: فلقد هممت أن أطرح نفسي من حالقٍ من جبل، فتبدّى لي حين هممت بذلك، فقال: يا محمّد، أنا جبريل، وأنت رسول الله]. [ثم قال: اقرأ، قلت: ما أقرأ؟ قال: فأخذني فغتّني ثلاث مرات، حتى بلغ منّي الجهد، ثم قال: ﴿اقرأ باسم ربك الذى خلق﴾، فقرأتُ] [فأتيتُ خديجة فقلت: لقد أشفقتُ على نفسي، فأخبرتها خبري، فقالت: أبشرْ، فوالله لا يُخزيكَ الله أبداً، ووالله إنّك لتصلُ الرَّحم، وتصدقُ الحديث، وتؤدي الأمانة، وتحملُ الكَلَّ وتقري الضيف، وتعين على نوائب الحق]. [ثم انطلقتْ بي إلى ورقة بن نوفل بن أسد، قالت: اسمع من ابن أخيك، فسألني فأخبرته خبري، فقال: هذا الناموسُ الذي أنزل على موسى بن عمران، ليتني فيها جذعٌ! ليتني أكون حيّاً حين يخرجك قومُك! قلت: أَمُخرجيَّ هم؟ قال: نعم، إنه لم يجئْ رجلٌ قط بما جئتَ به إلا عُودي، ولئن أدركني يومك أنصرك نصراً مؤزرا]. [ثم كان أول ما نزل عليَّ من القرآن بعد «اقرأ»: ﴿نٓ والقلم وما يسطرون * ما أنت بنعمة ربك بمجنون * وإن لك لأجرا غير ممنون * وإنك لعلىٰ خلق عظيم * فستبصر ويبصرون﴾، و﴿يـٰأيها المدثر * قم فأنذر﴾ و ﴿والضحى * والّيل إذا سجى﴾].

حدثنا محمد بن عبد الأعلى، قال: حدثنا ابن ثور، عن معمر عن الزهري، قال: فتر الوحي عن رسول الله ﷺ فترة، فحزن حزناً شديداً، جعل يغدو إلى رءوس شواهق الجبال ليتردّى منها، فكلما أوفى بذروة جبل تبدّى له جبرئيل، فيقول: إنك نبي الله، فيسكن لذلك جأشُه، وترجع إليه نفسه]، [فكان النبي ﷺ يحدث عن ذلك، قال: بينما أنا أمشي يوماً، إذ رأيت الملك الذي كان يأتيني بحراء، على كرسي بين السماء والأرض، فجئثت منه رعباً، فرجعت إلى خديجة، فقلت: زمِّلوني]، [فزملناه ـ أي دثرناه ـ فأنزل الله عزّ وجلّ: ﴿يـٰأيها المدثر * قم فأنذر * وربك فكبر * وثيابك فطهر﴾]. [قال الزهري: فكان أول شيء أنزل عليه: ﴿اقرأ باسم ربك الذى خلق﴾ حتى بلغ ﴿ما لم يعلم﴾]

senger of Allah's going back to Kahdîjah, his expressing anxiety about himself and her words of consolation to him, ending with the statement: "You succour the agents of the truth (?)"

G. In the seventh is placed the portion which narrates Khadîjah's taking her husband to Waraqah ibn Nawfal, the latter's listening to the Messenger of Allah's experience and then remarking: "This is the *nâmûs* which was sent down (or revealed) to Mûsâ", adding that the Messenger of Allah would be expelled by his tribe at which he expressed his surprise, etc., ending with Waraqah's remark that if he lived long he would help him valiantly.

H. In the eighth passage is placed that part of the report wherein the Messenger of Allah is stated to have said that the first part of the Qur'ân to be revealed to him was *sûrah* 96, *sûrah* 68:1-5 (*al-Qalam*), *sûrah* 74:1-2 (*al-Muddaththir*) and *sûrah* 93:1-2 (*al-Ḍuḥâ*).

I. In the ninth passage is reproduced Al-Zuhri's report about the *fatrah* (pause) in *waḥy*, which is given by Al-Ṭabarî a couple of pages subsequently and which says that the Messenger of Allah became so sorrowful at the cessation of *waḥy* that he used to go to the mountain tops to throw himself down from them. "But whenever he reached the summit of a mountain Gabriel would appear to him and say thou art the Prophet of God. At this his restlessness would cease...".

J. In the tenth passage is placed that part of the report which says that speaking about *fatrah* the Messenger of Allah said: "While I was walking one day, I saw the angel who used to come to me at Ḥirâ' on a throne (*kursî*) between heaven and earth. I was stricken with fear of him, and returned to Khadîjah and said: cover me".

K. In the eleventh passage is placed: "So we covered him, that is we put a *dathar* on... and God the most high sent down, O thou clothed in *dathar*... Thy garments purify".

L. In the 12th is placed Al-Zuhrî's statement: The first to be revealed to him was "Recite in the name of thy Lord who created... up to what he did not know."

Watt also gives the sumamry of Al-Zuhrî's report from Jâbir ibn 'Abd Allah al-Anṣârî about *fatrah* and the revelation of the first part of *sûrat al-Muddaththir*. Thus having reproduced Al-Zuhrî's report Watt proceeds to "consider the internal evidence of the passages" and what he calls the "various featutes of the stories". He does so under seven sub-headings and a final section. The sub-headings are as follows:

(a) "*Muḥammad's visions*"

(b) "*The visit to Ḥirâ'; taḥannuth*"

(c) *"'Thou art the Messenger of God'"*

(d) *"'Recite'"*

(e) *"Sûrat al-Muddaththir; the Fatrah"*

(f) *"Muḥammad's fear and despair"*

(g) *"Encouragement from Khadîjah and Waraqah"*

The title of the final section is: "The form of Muḥammad's Prophetic consciousness". These are discussed below.

II. "MUḤAMMAD'S VISIONS"

Watt starts his discussion under this first sub-heading of his by referring to that part of Al-Zuhrî's report which he reproduces in his passage A. He says that there are no good grounds for doubting that Muḥammad's (ﷺ) prophetic experience began with "true vision" and observes that this "is quite distinct from dreams" and that "visions are mentioned also in B and J (apart from the appearances of Gabriel in D and I)".[1]

It may at once be pointed out that Watt adopts here simply Bell's translation of the expression *al-ru'yâ al-ṣâdiqah*. This expression, as already pointed out,[2] means "true dreams", not "true vision". It may be recalled that Al-Zuhrî's, or rather 'Â'ishah's report in *Bukhârî* which Bell quotes, contains the expression "in sleep" after "true dreams". Al-Ṭabarî's version of the report, which is not quite accurate, and which Watt adopts, does not of course contain the expression "in sleep", but it is clear from the internal evidence of even this version that al-*ru'yâ al-ṣâdiqah* which is stated as the beginning of the Prophetic experience is a stage quite distinct from, and prior to the one that followed, namely, *al-taḥannuth* at Ḥirâ' and the experience which came in its wake. The unequivocal statement of the report, which Watt places at the start of his passage B, is: "Afterwards solitude became dear to him and he would go to a cave on Ḥirâ' to engage in *taḥannuth*..." Watt disregards this clear distinction between the two types of experiences described in the report, adopts the faulty or rather tendentious translation of Bell and thus equates the expression *al-ru'yâ al-ṣâdiqah* with the other type of experience described in his passages B and J, thus doing violence to the tenor and purport of the text he himself adopts. The post-*taḥannuth* experience is nowhere described in the traditions, nor in the Qur'ân as *al-ru'yâ*

1. Watt, *Muḥammad at Mecca*, p.42.
2. *Supra*, pp. 426-428.

al-ṣâdiqah. A moment's thinking also makes it clear that the addition of the adjective *al-ṣâdiqah* to the act, *al-ru'yâ*, indicates that it is a description of that type of viewing which is usually and normally not "true", that is dream. No one would bother to add the adjective, "true", to the act of physical viewing with one's eyes.

Watt's purpose is, however, to bring this so-called "vision" in line with what is described in *sûrat al-Najm*, and thus support the Margoliouth-Bell theory discussed in the previous chapter. Hence, immediately after having made the above noted statements Watt cites that *sûrah* as supportive evidence of the "vision" and quotes its first 18 *'âyahs* (omitting *'âyahs* 11 and 12) in his own translation. He then observes that "there are grounds for thinking that Muḥammad originally interpreted these as visions of God Himself".[1] The grounds mentioned by Watt are:

(i) "There is no mention of Gabriel in the Qur'ân until the Medinan period."

(ii) The subject of the verbs in verse 10 of *sûrat al-Najm* should be God, or else the construction becomes "awkward".

(iii) "The phrase at the end of passage B, 'the Truth came to him and said...' is similar in import, for "the Truth is a way of referring to God".[2]

(iv) Jâbir ibn 'Abd Allah's tradition, which is referred to by Bell, quotes the Prophet as saying (in Bell's translation): "... I heard a voice calling me, and I looked all around but could see no one; then I looked above my head and there *he* was sitting upon the throne".[3]

In translating the passage of *sûrat al-Najm* Watt adopts Bell's rendering of the expressions *waḥy* and *'awḥâ* as "suggestions" and "suggested". These meanings, as pointed out in the previous chapter, are not at all correct for Qur'ânic *waḥy*. Secondly, Watt's statement: "Muḥammad interpreted these" etc., contains two innuendoes. It implies that the "vision" was not actual but something mental, a view which Watt attempts to establish all through. It also suggests that the passage of *sûrat al-Najm*, on which Watt obviously bases his statement, is an "interpretation," that is, a composition by

1. Watt, *Muḥammad at Mecca*, p 42.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*

Muḥammad (ﷺ), a view which is common to all the orientalists, though Watt appears not to avow it openly.

As regards the grounds mentioned by Watt all, except iii, are simply Bell's. These assertions of his and their premises have already been examined and it has been shown that each item of the assumptions is untenable.[1] In iv Watt does not specifically reiterate Bell's mistaken claim that "the throne" is appropriate to Allah and leaves the reader to understand it. The mistake in this particular assumption has also been pointed out.[2] As regards Jâbir ibn 'Abd Allah al-'Anṣârî's report, which Watt himself cites,[3] it may be noted that it unequivocally points out that the Messenger of Allah "saw the angel" who used to come to him at Ḥirâ', "on a chair between the sky and the earth."

Regarding Watt's own addition to the list of arguments, namely iii above, two things need to be noted. In the first place, the version of Al-Zuhrî's report in *Bukhârî* and other works is slightly different at this point. It is ... حتى جاءه الحق وهو في غار حراء فجاءه المَلَكُ فقال meaning "till the truth came to him while he was in the cave of Ḥirâ'. The angel came to him and said...." However, in Al-Ṭabarî's version, which Watt quotes, the expression runs as: فجأه الحق ، فأتاه ، فقال , meaning "Till the truth surprised him. He came to him and said...." Thus the expression فجاءه (*Fa-jâ'ahu*) is replaced by فجأه (*Faja'ahu*), and there is no mention of the angel at this point. But it is clear that فجأه الحق (*Faja'ahu al-ḥaqq*) is one sentence, and فأتاه ، فقال (*Fa-'atâhu fa-qâla*) is another sentence. Watt, however, does not translate this portion of the report quite faithfully. He combines the two sentences into one, translating it as: "At length unexpectedly the Truth came to him and said..." The Arabic equivalent of this translation would be: فجأه الحق وقال (*Faja'ahu al-ḥaqq wa qâla*). Watt has thus combined the two sentences into one, omitting from his translation the expression فأتاه (*Fa-'atâhu*), which is the beginning of an independent sentence. He has also capitalized the first letter of "truth" so that the meaning is more in line with his suggestion. If this was not done, and if due attention was paid to the specific mention of the angel at two places in the

1. *Supra*, pp.423-424.

2. *Supra*, pp.439-446.

3. Watt, *op. cit.*, p.41. See also Al-Ṭabarî, *Târikh*, 1156. The text runs as follows:

حدثني يونس بن عبد الأعلى، قال : أخبرنا ابن وهب، قال : أخبرني يونس، عن ابن شهاب، قال : أخبرني أبو سلمة بن عبد الرحمن، أن جابر بن عبد الله الأنصاري، قال : قال رسول الله ﷺ وهو يحدث عن فترة الوحي : بينا أنا أمشي سمعت صوتا من السماء، فرفعت رأسي، فإذا الملك الذي جاءني بحراء جالس على كرسي بين السماء والأرض...

text which is continuous here in the original but which Watt has broken into as many as 7 passages "for convenience", it would have been clear that the subject of the verb *Fa-'atâhu* (فأتاه) is the angel. Even after such division of a continuous text Watt recognizes that the angel Jibrîl is mentioned by name not very far away from this part, i.e. in what he chops into passage D.

Further, it is to be noticed that in the original Arabic text, which is continuous, the appearance of the entity is mentioned three times thus: "So he came to him and said..... Then he came to me and said.... Thereupon he appeared before me...and said O Muḥammad, I am Jibril...."(فأتاه فقال...ثم أتاني فقال...فتبدى لي...فقال يا محمد أنا جبريل). The prepositions *fa*, *thumma* and *fa* prefixed to the verbs show conclusively that it is a continuous narrative and that the same entity is spoken of throughout. Up to this point there is no break in the narrative nor any change of narrator. The sole narrator here is 'Â'ishah who is giving the report sometimes in her own words, sometimes in the words of the Prophet himself. Watt himself seems to recognize this fact when he says: "Passages A to H were presumably continuous in az-Zuhrî, but they need not all have come from 'Â'ishah.."[1] The manoeuvre thus made here to create doubt about 'Â'ishah being the narrator is obvious but not justifiable. Passage H of course comes in Al-Ṭabarî in a separate paragraph, and it need not have come from her; but there can be no doubt that the section previous to H is a continuous narrative and the sole narrator is 'Â'ishah. Watt makes another attempt to confuse the issue here. He says, the fact "that Ibn Isḥâq breaks off 'Â'ishah's narrative after the first sentence of B [i.e.,"Afterwards solitude became dear to him"] is probably due to his having other versions of the remainder which he preferred, and does not necessarily indicate a break in the source at that point."[2] The remark is curious because if Ibn Isḥâq's having preferred "other versions" does not "necessarily indicate a break in the source at that point", then why this emphasis on his breaking off of 'Â'ishahs narrative? The remark is also inappropriate, because we are concerned here with 'Âishah's (Al-Zuhrî's) account as given in Al-Ṭabari, and not with Ibn Isḥâq's version which Watt himself does not adopt because, according to him, it has been rewritten. It appears that while dividing Al-Zuhrî's account into so many passages on the ground of what he calls breaks in the material indicated by change of narrator, he cannot at the same time conceal the fact that there really is no break in the narrative in its greater and

1. Watt, *Muḥammad at Mecca*, p.41.
2. *Ibid.*

most material part, nor any change of narrator there, and that the divisions made by him are arbitrary and not in accord with the grounds he has advanced.

It seems that the real reason for his having chopped Al-Zuhrî's account into so many separate passages is to suggest, as he does shortly afterwards, that the speaker to Muḥammad (ﷺ) in passage B is "the Truth", in C "merely he", and in D and I Jibrîl.[1] Watt also intends to maintain that Jibrîl, who is mentioned by name in two of the passages, need not be taken into account in connection with the coming of *waḥy* to Muḥammad (ﷺ). It must not be lost sight of that Al-Zuhrî's account is very much continuous and that even with the divisions introduced on purpose by Watt the existence of the prepositions *fa*, *thumma* and *fa* with the verbs that follow the sentence فجاءه الحق (*fajâ'ahu al-ḥaqq*) shows that it is the same entity, Jibrîl, who is spoken of throughout and who is mentioned by name at the end. The sequence of the description as well as grammatical rules require that Jibrîl should be taken as the subject of the verb فأتاه (*fa-'atâhu*) with which the narration starts here and which Watt omits from his translation.

The third thing to note in this connection is the relation of the sentence فجأه الحق (*faja'ahu al-ḥaqq*), "Suddenly the truth came to him", with what follows in the text, as well as the meaning of the expression *al-ḥaqq* (الحق). It may be recalled that the expression in the other versions of the account is *fajâ'ahu al-ḥaqq* (فجاءه الحق),i.e., "Then the truth came to him". There is, however, little difference in the sense in either form. What follows in the text is of course a description of how "the truth" came to the Prophet; but neither does *al-ḥaqq* mean here God, nor is it, as shown above, the subject of the verbs that occur in the description which follows. Watt puts the meaning of God upon the expression because, according to him, "this is a way of referring to God."[2] His reasoning itself betrays an admission that there are other senses in which the expression is used. Indeed, it occurs more than 260 times in the Qur'ân in more than 20 different senses.[3] Nowhere in the Qur'ân, however, does *al-ḥaqq* appear independently to denote God. It is only at some 9 places that it comes as an attribute of God, but always along with the mention of Allah or *rabb*, such as at 20:114 and 23:116 ﴿ فتعالى الله الملك الحق ﴾;

1. *Ibid.* p.45.
2. *Ibid.*, p.42.
3. See for instance Muḥammad 'Abd al-Raḥmân al-Râwî, *Kalimat al-Ḥaqq Fî-al-Qur'ân*, 2 Vols., Imam Muḥammad University, Riyadh, 1409 H.

﴿أن الله هو الحق﴾ 24:25 ; ﴿فذٰلكم الله ربكم الحق﴾ 10:32; ﴿وردوا إلى الله مولٰهم الحق﴾ 10:30 etc.[1] On the other hand, it has been used in the sense of Qur'ânic *waḥy* more than fifty times,[2] being the largest single majority of instances in which it has been used in a particular sense; and that also almost always with the verb *jâ'a* (جاء). Some of the instances are as follows:

(a) (١٠:٧٦) ﴿فلما جاءهم الحق من عندنا قالوا إن هذا لسحر مبين﴾ "When *al-ḥaqq* came to them from Us they said: this is indeed evident sorcery."(10:76)

(b) (١٠:٩٤) ﴿لقد جآءك الحق من ربك فلا تكونن من الممترين﴾ "*Al-ḥaqq* has indeed come to you from your Lord. So be in no wise of those in doubt." (10:94)

(c) (٢٨:٤٨) ﴿فلما جآءهم الحق من عندنا قالوا لولآ أوتي مثل مآ أوتي موسىٰ﴾

"But when *al-ḥaqq* has come to them from Ourselves, they say: why is he not given the like of what Mûsâ was given?" (28:48)

(d) (٤٣:٢٩) ﴿بل متعت هـٰؤلآء وءابآءهم حتى جآءهم الحق ورسول مبين﴾

"Rather I have given good things to these people and their ancestors, till *al-ḥaqq* has come to them, and a Messenger making things clear." (43:29)

(e) (٤٣:٣٠) ﴿ولما جآءهم الحق قالوا هـٰذا سحر وإنا به كـٰفرون﴾

"And when *al-ḥaqq* came to them they said, 'this is sorcery and we reject it." (43:30)

(f) (٣٤:٦) ﴿الذى أنزل إليك من ربك هو الحق﴾ "And that which has been sent down to you from your Lord is *al-ḥaqq*"(34:6)

(g) (٣٥:٣١) ﴿والذى أوحينآ إليك من الكتـٰب هو الحق....﴾

"And that which We have communicated to you of the Book is *al-ḥaqq*" (35:31)

Thus a reference to the Qur'ân (as well as to the traditions) makes it clear that the most frequent use of *al-ḥaqq* is in the sense of Qur'ânic *waḥy* and that the term, though undoubtedly an attribute of God, has never been used independently to denote God. The expression فجاء الحق or فجاءه الحق in the account under discussion therefore means the coming of *waḥy* and not, as Watt would have us believe, the appearance of God before the Prophet.

Having attempted to show from Al-Zuhrî's account and *sûrat al-Najm* that the Prophet claimed to have a "vision"of Allah, Watt proceeds to state that if this was "Muḥammad's original interpretation of the vision, it could

1. The other places are Q. 18:44; 31:39; 22:6 and 22:62.

2. These are Q. 2:26; 2:42; 2:91; 2:109; 2:144; 2:146; 2:147; 2:149; 3:60; 3:71; 4:170; 5:48; 5:87; 6:5; 6:114; 7:43; 7:53; 8:6; 8:32; 9:48; 10:76; 10:77; 10:94; 10:108; 11:17; 11:120; 13:1; 13:19; 16:102; 17:56; 17:81; 22:54; 23:70; 28:48; 28:53; 29:68; 32:3; 34:6; 34:43; 34:49; 35:24; 35:31; 37:37; 40:5; 43:29; 43:30; 43:78; 46:7; 50:5; 57:16; 60:1. = 52 times.

hardly have been his final one, for it contradicts 6:103 which says 'sight reacheth not Him." In this connection Watt refers also to *'âyah* 11 of the *sûrat al-Najm* which he quotes in Bell's translation as "the heart did not falsify what it saw" and states that this *'âyah* was "perhaps added later."[1] One may easily detect that here Watt is merely reproducing Bell's views that Muḥammad (ﷺ) first claimed to have seen Allah and then, as he realized his mistake, modified his position and introduced the *'âyah* in the *sûrah* to give an impression of a spiritual or mental vision.[2] The premises on which these assumptions are based have already been examined and shown to be untenable.[3] It may once again be emphasized that neither Al-Zuhrî's account nor *sûrat al-Najm* speaks of "vision of Allah", so that there is no question of contradiction with another Qur'ânic passage such as 6:103, nor of modification in subsequent *'âyah's* of *sûrat al-Najm*. The "vision of Allah" is a groundless surmise, on which is based a further incorrect assumption of contradiction and a still further conjecture of modification, all of which are wrong and untenable.

It may be recalled[4] that *'âyah* 18 of *sûrat al-Najm*, which speaks of the Prophet's having seen with his eyes (*baṣar*) "one of the greatest signs of his Lord," runs counter to the theory of a mental or spiritual vision as also of a vision of God. Bell silently passes over this *'âyah* when he presents his theory. Watt, however, undertakes to fill this lacuna in Bell's presentation and attempts to bring the *'âyah* in line with the theory of a spiritual vision. Hence, referring to the *'âyah* he observes that this "might be taken to mean that what Muḥammad had seen was a sign or symbol of the glory and majesty of God". He then relates it to *'âyah* 11 ("the heart did not falsify what it saw") and says that this suggests "that while the eyes perceived the sign or symbol, the heart perceived the thing symbolized." Thus, continues Watt, though Muḥammad's (ﷺ) original interpretation of the "vision as a direct vision of God" was "not quite accurate, in essentials he was not mistaken. Perhaps the verse ought to be translated: 'the heart was not mistaken in respect of what he, the man saw'."[5]

1. Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, p.43.
2. *Supra*, pp.439-446.
3. *Supra*, pp.441-444.
4. See *supra*, pp.440-441.
5. Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, p.43.

The above remarks are clearly based on the fautly assumption that the Prophet had "originally interpreted the vision as a direct vision of God". He did *not* do so; nor does the passage of *sûrat al-Najm* bear that meaning. Hence there is no conflict between the *'âyahs* of the *sûrah* and therefore no need to advance such an interpretation as would bring them into agreement. The interpretation is in fact an unwarranted twist in the meaning of *'âyah* 11, for Watt says: "while the eyes perceived the sign or symbol, the heart perceived the thing symbolized", that is God. The *'âyah* in no way suggests that the eyes perceived one thing, that is a sign of God, and the heart saw or perceived another thing, that is God. The plain meaning of the *'âyah* is that the heart and the eyes were in unison — it was no mistake of the heart, that is, no mistaken impression of his (the Prophet's) about what he saw with his eyes. "The heart was not mistaken", as Watt translates it alternatively, "in respect of what he, the man saw". The whole emphasis is on the very antithesis of a mental or spiritual vision.

Watt's aim in giving this twist in the sense is, as he plainly states, "to avoid making it a vision of Gabriel, which would be unhistorical, and also to avoid contradicting the view of Islamic orthodoxy that Muḥammad had not seen God"[1]. The question arises: why this eagerness to prove that it was not Jibrîl who appeared before the Prophet, if the clear meaning of the passage of *sûrat al-Najm* is, as Watt and Bell would have us believe, that Muḥammad (ﷺ) originally mistook it to be a direct vision of God and subsequently rectified the mistake by giving the impression of a mental vision? Watt's avowed object rather betrays an awareness on his part of the fact that the interpretation he puts on the passage of *sûrat al-Najm* is not quite its plain meaning. Also the reason given, namely, that a vision of Jibrîl "would be unhistorical", is clearly based on the old plea that Jibrîl is not mentioned by name in the Makkan passages of the Qur'ân. That plea has already been shown to be untenable and incorrect.[2] The plea is also inconsistent on Watt's part; for, unlike Bell, he does not seem to hold the view that traditions should not be brought into consideration in this connection. Watt recognizes that there is clear mention of Jibrîl in Al-Zuhrî's report, particularly in what he puts in his passages D and I. Watt gets rid of these passages by observing that the mention of Jibrîl therein is suspicious, thus implying that those parts

1. *Ibid.*
2. *Supra*, pp.443-448.

of the report have been tampered with by subsequent narrators. The implication is also inconsistent with the very ground on which he prefers this version of Al-Zuhrî's report, namely, that it has not been rewritten as has Ibn Hishâm's been. If subsequent reporters had modified those portions of the report, they would have modified also its initial part where the coming of the truth is mentioned. For, according to Watt, that means the appearance of God before the Prophet and that is contrary to what he calls the Islamic orthodoxy. The fact is that neither those parts of the report that mention Jibrîl are later interpolations, nor does the coming of the truth mean the appearance of God. It may also be recalled that the passage of *sûrat al-Najm* is not the only Qur'ânic information regarding the coming of *wahy* to the Prophet and that the passage should be understood in combination with similar passages in the Qur'ân, particularly 81:19-23, as explained earlier.[1]

Watt is of course aware of the existence of other Qur'ânic passages in this respect. Before noticing how he deals with them it is necessary to refer to the second motive in his above mentioned interpretation of the passage of *sûrat al-Najm*, namely, as he says, "to avoid contradicting the view of Islamic orthodoxy that Muhammad had not seen God". Any reader who has gone through the previous chapter of the present work would at once recognize that this statement of Watt's is based on the totally groundless assumption of Bell that the so-called orthodox Islamic belief in this respect was a development subsequent to the time of the Prophet and that it is at variance with what Bell thinks the Qur'ânic testimony to the effect that Muhammad (ﷺ) had originally claimed to have seen Allah. The question thus once again turns upon the interpretation of the passage of *sûrat al-Najm*, and once again it should be pointed out that the interpretation given by Bell and Watt is wrong.

Watt, as already indicated, is aware of the existence of other Qur'ânic passages bearing on the meaning of the passage of *sûrat al-Najm*. But he disposes of them by invoking the opinion of Karl Ahrens who says that there is no mention of Jibrîl in the Makkan passages of the Qur'ân, that the *rasûl karîm* of 81:19 was originally identified with *al-rûh*, and that angels are mentioned in the Makkan passages in the plural only. Watt also calls attention in this connection to 26:193: "with which hath come down the Faithful Spirit" and says that this "would fit in with the view here developed",[2] that is, the

1. *Supra*, pp.420-422, 439-440.
2. Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, p.43.

view that the Prophet had a spiritual vision of God.

Karl Ahrens is right in saying that the *rasûl karîm* of 81:19 is identifiable with *al-rûḥ* (as in 97:4); but it is not correct that *al-rûḥ* or *al-rûḥ al-'amîn* (the faithful spirit) is other than Jibrîl or that it fits in with the view of a spiritual vision of God. Nor is it correct that angels are mentioned only in the plural in the Makkan passages of the Qur'ân.[1]

Let us now consider the three Qur'ânic passages cited here (i.e., 81:19; 97;4 and 26:193). As regards the first passage,[2] four points need to be noted carefully. (a) The *rasûl karîm* here is mentioned specifically as conveyer of the Qur'ânic *waḥy*. (b) The very fact that he is described as a *noble messenger* militates against his being identical with God; he is simply His messenger. (c) The same nature of his is emphasized in the immediately following *'âyah* (81:20) wherein it is said that he has his position "near the Lord of the Throne". That means he is not in any way to be confused with the "Lord of the Throne" (God). It is further stated in this *'âyaḥ* that he is "possessor of strength" (ذي قوة). The similarity of this phrase with the description "strong in power" (شديد القوى) in *sûrat al-Najm* is remarkable. (d) He is described in the next *'âyah* (81:21) as "one obeyed" (مطاع) and "faithful" (أمين). As he is not the Lord of the Throne, the expression "one obeyed" must have reference to the others like him who obeyed him, i.e., he has only a position of primacy among his compeers. In other words, he is someone "special" among a group of similar beings. It is also noteworthy that the description *'amîn* is strikingly the same as given to *al-ruḥ* in 26:193 —"the faithful spirit". Karl Ahrens, and with him Watt, agree in saying that the *rasûl karîm* of 81:19 is identifiable with *al-rûḥ*. Thus by the internal evidence of the passage 81:19 ff and by their admission the *rasûl karîm* is the same *as al-rûḥ al-'amîn* and he is different from God and is, moreover, a conveyer of *waḥy*.

As regards the second passage, namely 97:4, the expression here is of course simply *al-rûḥ* along with *al-malâ'ikah* (the angels). Karl Ahrens and Watt seem to imply that *al-rûḥ* is different in nature from *al-malâ'ikah*; but that is not correct. It is a recognized style in Arabic language to mention the special one (*khâṣ*) separately from a general body of a particular group when they are to be mentioned together. Instances of such mention of the *khâṣ*

1. See for instance 6:8, 9, 50; 11:12, 31; 12:31; 25:7; 32:11; 53:26; 17:95 and 69:178.

2. See also *supra*, pp. 418-421,439-442.

separately along with the general body (*'âm*) are numerous in Arabic literature. But apart from this rule of the language, the internal evidence of the passage clearly marks out *al-rûḥ* to be different from God: for the sentence says that the angels (*al-malâ'ikah*) and *al-rûḥ* come down "by permission of their Lord" (بإذن ربهم). Therefore the Lord of both the angels and *al-rûḥ* is different. Clearly *al-rûḥ* here is not identical with the Lord. And as he is mentioned specially along with the angels, he and they all coming down by permission of *their* Lord, the unavoidable meaning is that he, *al-rûḥ*, is a special one of them. And since the *rasûl karîm* in 81:19 is marked out as a special one and as the conveyer of *waḥy*, and since both Karl Ahrens and Watt agree in saying that the *rasûl karîm* is identical with *al-rûḥ*, he is the same being who brings *waḥy* and who is an angel. The identification of the *rasûl karîm* as an angel is supported by 35:1 which speaks of Allah's employing messengers (*rusul*) from among the angels. It is to be noted that while the reference here is to the taking of angels as messengers in general, it is only a particular *messenger* in the singular who is always spoken of as the conveyer of *waḥy*.

Similarly the third passage (26:193) clearly mentions "the faithful spirit" as the one who brings down *waḥy* (نزل به الروح الأمين). For the same reasons as stated above this *al-rûḥ al-'amîn* is the same as the *rasûl karîm*, who is also described as *'amîn* (faithful) and as the conveyer of *waḥy*. The internal evidence here also distinguishes *al-rûḥ al-'amîn* from God. For, in the previous *'âyah*, 26:192, the Qur'ân (or Qur'ânic *waḥy*) is spoken of as *tanzîl* i.e., something sent down, by the Lord of all the worlds. The causative nature of the expression (*tanzîl*) shows that God sent it down, not that He came down with it. The succeeding *'âyah*, 26:193, clarifies the position further and says that it is *al-rûḥ al-*'amin who came down with it.

Thus the *rasûl karîm* and *al-rûḥ al-'amîn*, both of whom are mentioned as the conveyer of *waḥy*, are one and the same individual. That he is an angel is shown by (a) the mention of *al-rûḥ* along with angels as a special one among them (70:4; 78:38 & 97:4); (b) the mention of angels as having been employed as messengers by God (35:1); (c) the mention of the conveyer of *waḥy* as a *noble messenger*, i.e., a special one from among the angels who are taken as messengers; (d) the specific mention of him by name, Jibrîl, as the conveyer of *waḥy* in 2:97 and (e) the mention of him by name in the traditions also as the conveyer of *waḥy*.

The name Jirbîl of course occurs only three times in the Madinan passages of the Qur'ân; but that does not mean that there is no reference to him in the Makkan passages. Nor that someone else is spoken of as the conveyer of *waḥy* in the Makkan passages. For one thing, the expressions *al-rûḥ* or *al-rûḥ al-'amîn*, not to speak of the *rasûl karîm*, can by on stretch of the imagination be taken in the Christian sense of the Spirit or Holy Spirit, which is what Watt seems to suggest. The expressions *al-rûḥ*, *al-rûḥ al-'amîn* and *rûḥ al-qudus* occur some 21 times in the Qur'ân.[1] In none of the places it is used in the sense of God or His attribute. In six out of the 21 places it is used in connection with 'Îsâ and his mother Maryam;[2] but at each of these places it has the meaning of either the spirit of life or the angel (Jibrîl). In any case, at none of these places is the word coterminous with the Divine Being, for the unmistakable tenor and purport of each of the passages is to contradict the concept of the Trinity or to deny the supposed divinity of 'Îsâ.[3]

III. "THE VISIT TO ḤIRÂ'; TAḤANNUTH"

After presenting his views about what he calls "Muḥammad's visions" Watt passes on to the second sub-title: *The visit to Ḥirâ'; taḥannuth*. It must not be supposed that the subject of the "visions" is left behind. It indeed forms a constant theme in all the sections, and Watt's aim is all along to suggest that the "vision", indeed *waḥy*, is something mental, psychological or psycho-intellectual in nature.

As regards the visit to Ḥirâ' and *taḥannuth* Watt differs from his preceptor Bell who denies the authenticity of the report about them. Watt says that there "is no improbability in Muḥammad's going to Ḥirâ'".[4] He then presents what one scholar very aptly calls "a compound version of the views" of others.[5] Watt states that Muḥammad's (ﷺ) going to Ḥirâ' "might be a method of escaping from the heat of Mecca in an unpleasant season for those who could not afford to go to at-Ṭâ'if". Having said that Watt adds immedi-

1. These places are: Q. 2:87; 2:253; 4:171; 5:110; 16:2; 16:102; 17:85 (two times); 26:193; 40:15; 58:22; 70:4; 78:38; 97:4; 42:51; 19:17; 21:91; 66:12; 32:9; 15:29 and 38:72.

2. These are: Q. 2:87; 2:253; 4:171; 5:113; 21:91; 66:12.

3. See for a detailed discussion on *rûḥ* Ibn al-Qayyim, *Kitâb al-Rûḥ*, Hyderabad, 1324 H. See also its summary in M.W., 1935, pp. 129-144. Cf. D.B. Macdonald, "The development of the idea of spirit in Islam", *M.W.*, 1932, pp.25-42 and 153-168.

4. Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, p.44.

5. See M.J. Kister, "*Al-Taḥannuth*: An Enquiry into the meaning of a term", *B.S.O.A.S.*, Vol. XXXI, 1968, p. 229.

ately: "Judaeo-Christian influence, such as the example of monks, or a little personal experience" would have shown Muḥammad (ﷺ) "the need and desirability of solitude".[1]

The two consecutive sentences quoted above in fact represent two different views. The first view, that the resort to Ḥirâ' was something of a poor man's summer holiday was first suggested by Aloy Sprenger in the mid-nineteenth century.[2] Ever since he made that suggestion, however, no European writer of note adopted that view or treated it as a reasonable explanation of the affair. Watt, however, adopts and reproduces it, without referring to Sprenger in any way. Neither Sprenger nor Watt asks himself the very pertinent questions whether the climate of Ḥirâ' differs in any way from that of the town of Makka in the summer and why, of all the neighbouring hills, should Ḥirâ' in particular have been chosen as the supposed summer resort? If they had asked themselves these preliminary questions about the geography of Makka they would surely have given a second thought to this novel suggestion of theirs.

The second view, that of Judaeo-Christian influence, specially the instance of Christian monks, suggesting "the need and desirability of solitude", is indeed the suggestion of a number of Watt's predecessors, notably J. Herschfield[3] and Tor Andrae.[4] Watt does not, however, refer to either of them in this connection. The unsoundness of the general assumption of Judaeo-Christian influence upon the evolution of Muḥammad's (ﷺ) thought has been noted earlier.[5] It may be observed here, however, that the two views thus put forth in the two consecutive sentences are incompatible. If the retirement at Ḥirâ' was a sort of a summer holiday, there is no need to invoke Judaeo-Christian influence in the matter. If, on the other hand, it was done in imitation of the practice of the Christian monks, the theory of summer holiday is both unnecessary and irrelevant.

After having made the above noted remarks about the retirement at Ḥirâ' Watt refers to the origin and meaning of the term *taḥannuth*. In this he generally follows what Bell and Herschfield suggest, namely, that the term means

1. Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, p.44.
2. A. Sprenger, *Das Leben und die Lehre des Mohammed*, I, Berlin, 1860, pp.295-296.
3. H. Herschfield, *New Researches into the composition and exigecies of the Qoran*, London, 1902, p.19.
4. Tor Andrae, *Mohammed, Sein Leben und Glaube*, Gottingen 1832, pp.34-35.
5. *Supra*, chapter XI.

either prayer for God's favour or "doing some work to escape from sin or crime". Watt then proceeds to "fill out hypothetically", as he says, the account of what actually transpired. He says that Muḥammad (ﷺ) had from an early age been aware of the social and religious problems of Makka. His being an orphan made him all the more alive to those problems. He also imbibed the "vague monotheism found among the most enlightened Makkans". He also looked for some reform "and all the circumstances suggested that this reform must be primarily religious". In this state of mind he "deliberately sought solitude to reflect on Divine things and to perform some acts of worship, perhaps an expiation for sins".[1]

Watt thus in effect himself nullifies what he says previously about summer holidaying by Muḥammad (ﷺ) and his possible imitaion of the practice of the Christian monks. For, if he looked for some kind of reform in Makka and if "all the circumstances suggested that this reform must be primarily religious" and therefore he "deliberately sought solitude to reflect on Divine things" etc., both the surmises are unnecessary to explain his solitary retirement to Ḥirâ'. Watt's remarks here are, however, based on two distinct suggestions made by his predecessors, notably by Muir and Margoliouth. The one is the suggestion of ambition and preparation on Muḥammad's (ﷺ) part to play the role of a prophet-reformer.[2] The other is the theory that the political, religious and cultural situation in Arabia and the neighbouring Christian Byzantine state suggested that the contemplated reform should take on a religious character and that therefore Muḥammad (ﷺ) decided to assume the role of a prophet. Also the remark that in his retirment he probably performed some act in "expiation for sins" is reminiscent of the Muir-Margoliouth-Watt views about his previous religious beliefs and practices.[3]

All these themes have already been dealt with. The Prophet did of course retire into the cave of Ḥirâ' to reflect on Divine things; but there is no indication in the sources that he did so for discovering a framework for his contemplated socio-religious reform. Watt's story, as he himself points out, is hypothetical and, as we have pointed out, based in essence on the views of his predecessors. Whatever the Prophet's motive in seeking solitude at Ḥirâ', the coming of the revelation to him was by all accounts something sudden

1. Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, p. 44.
2. See *supra*, chapter X.
3. *Supra*, chapter VIII, sec. IV.

and unexpected. His bewilderment at what happened at Ḥirâ' and the subsequent consultation with Waraqah ibn Nawfal only emphasize this unexpectedness and unpreparedness on his part. These facts thus run directly counter to the assumption of contemplated reform, indeed of ambition and preparation. In order to sustain the theory of contemplated reform it is necessary therefore to dismantle the fact of the suddenness of the affair, or at least to create doubt about it. This is exactly what Watt seems to aim at. Thus immediately after having hypothetically filled out the account he observes that though the traditional accounts "suggest that the visions came during the retreat", the "comparative dates of the different features of Muḥammad's call are uncertain. Sometimes the appearance is said to be unexpected, and sometimes Khadîjah seems to have been not far away".[1]

It should at once be pointed out that whatever may be the uncertainty about what is called "the comparative dates of the different features" of the call, there is no uncertainty whatsover about the order of its main features, nor about its suddenness and unexpectedness. By all the accounts the "call" took place in the wake of the retirement at Ḥirâ' and the "appearance" or the "vision" was a simultaneous, indeed an inseparable feature of the call. Whether Khadîjah was near the Prophet at Ḥirâ', as stated in one of the reports reproduced by Ibn Isḥâq, or the Prophet was at home near her, as said in the version of Al-Zuhrî's report quoted by Watt, the "appearance" [of Jibrîl] was in every case sudden and unexpected. It is *not* "sometimes" that "the appearance is said to be unexpected"; it is always so in the reports. The emphasis on the suddenness and unexpectedness of the "call" and the "vision" is constant throughout all the reports in all their versions, despite their differences in matters of detail. Watt himself uses this sudden appearance of "the truth", as we have seen just a little while ago, to support his assumption of the "vision of God". But now he realizes that the facts of the suddenness of the "call" and the "vision", and the consequent bewilderment and uncertainty on the Prophet's part are strongly against the theory of his plans and contemplation for socio-religious reforms. Hence Watt now attempts to create doubt about the suddenness of the "call" and to show that it was something independent of the "vision". In fact, in the remaining sections of his discussions on the subject Watt isolates the "vision" from the "call" and suggests that the Prophet, though he was unceratin about his position, nonetheless continued

1. Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, p.44.

to receive revelations and to give them out to the public for about three years when, after the period of *fatrah* and that of "secret" preaching he saw the "visions" or the first "vision".[1]

IV. "THOU ART THE MESSENGER OF GOD"

Watt thus takes up the subjects of "the call" and the "visions" under his above mentioned third sub-title. He starts by saying that in B,C, D and I of "the passages from az-Zuhrî" the words "Thou art the Messenger of God" occur four times —in the first the speaker is "the Truth", in the second "merely 'he'" and in the last two Jibrîl. He then says that the circumstances are different in the four passages and raises the question whether these are "four versions of one event, that somehow or other have developed different features?" Watt observes that the mention of Jibrîl "at this early stage" is "suspicious", since he "is not mentioned in the Qur'ân until much later" and adds that the "experiences" described in the passages belong to two types—those in the first two (B & C) describe Muḥammad's (ﷺ) "original call to be a Messenger", and those in the other two (D & I) "appear to be reaffirmation of this to assure him in a time of anxiety".[2]

It is to be noted once again that what Watt calls "the passages from az-Zuhrî" are in fact passages made by Watt out of Al-Zuhrî's rather continuous account. By making such divisions in the text Watt has thought, or attempted to show that the "speakers" in the passages B through D and further on are different. As stated above, neither the context, nor the rules of grammar support this assumption. The speaker is throughout Jibrîl. Similarly the plea that the mention of Jibrîl at this stage is suspicious because he is not mentioned in the Qur'ân until much later is also untenable. It is also inconsistent with Watt's own approach; for he reproduces only Al-Ṭabari's version of Al-Zuhrî's report to the exclusion of all the other versions on the ground that it has not been "rewritten", i.e., modified by others. His now casting doubt on part of this version and, indeed, his reliance on the Qur'ânic evidence only regarding Jibrîl, which he also misconceives, is glaringly inconsistent.

Watt's purpose is, however, to isolate "the call" from the "vision". Hence, immediately after having made the above mentioned statements he begins another paragraph by asking: "If B refers to the original call, what is its relation to the visions?" The question is clearly confusing. The passage B, as

1. See below, text.
2. Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, p.45.

Watt has hitherto said, describes the "appearance" or the "vision" and he has attempted to suggest a little while ago that "the truth" mentioned in it should be understood in the sense of God. But now he slips away from that position and attempts to suggest that the passage only describes the original call to be a Messenger, implying that this is totally different from the "vision" so that the relationship between the two should be determined. It should at once be pointed out that what he calls a description of the "original call" is nothing but what happened in the "vision" described in the passage B. His question thus really amounts to a queer one, namely, "What is the relation of the vision to the vision?"

After putting the above mentioned question Watt refers to the passage of *sûrat al-Najm* and reiterates in effect what Bell says in this connection, namely, that the description of "the first vision" in that *sûrah* was given out in response to the Makkan unbelievers' objections to the genuineness of the revelations and that therefore at least one or several revealtions had been proclaimed before the narration of the vision in that *sûrah*. Watt says further that the vision which was narrated "must have something to do" with the reciept of revelations; yet, "there is nothing to show that the receiving of specific passages accompanied the vision..."[1]

In making this last statement Watt obviously changes his ground again, and that in two ways. He slips away from the Qur'ânic evidence and seems to concentrate only on the evidence of the report he cites. Secondly, he now also implies that the passage B of the report describes a "vision" but does not mention the delivery of any specific passage. For, otherwise, there is no ground for his making the statement that "there is nothing to show that the receiving of specific passages accompanied the vision".

Now, the text which Watt assigns to the passage B and which he seems to have in view does of course only speak about the entity's addressing Muḥammad (ﷺ) as "thou art the Messenger of God" and does not mention the delivery of any specific Qur'ânic passage. But, as already pointed out, Watt's passages A to G are all continuous in Al-Zuhrî's account as given in Al-Ṭabarî, and the narration up to the end of passage E speaks of the different circumstances attending the "call" and the delivery of the *iqra'* passage. In Watt's own translation the passage E starts thus: "Then he said, Recite. I said, I cannot recite..." The expression "Then he" unmistakably refers to

1. *Ibid.*

Jibrîl who is mentioned in the previous passage D. Watt of course doubts the mention of Jibrîl at this stage; but he (Watt) does not, and cannot, deny that the passage D speaks of an "appearance" or "vision" and that both the passages D and E together speak of a "vision" and the delivery of the *iqra'* passage which, elsewhere, Watt recognizes to be the first Qur'ânic passage to be delivered.[1] Thus his statement that "there is nothing to show that the receiving of specific passages accompanied the vision" is untenable and contrary to the very evidence he relies on.

The statement is contrary also to the Qur'ânic evidence; for whatever may be the view of Bell and Watt about the entity appearing in the "vision" described in *sûrat al-Najm*, it categorically says that it was that entity, the *shadîd al-Quwâ* and *dhû-mirrah*, who drew nearer than "two bow-lengths" and delivered to the Prophet what he was giving out as *waḥy* (*'âyahs* 4-10). The same thing is emphasized in 81:19-23 which says that it was a "saying", a text (*qawl*), which was delivered by "the noble messenger" whom the Prophet had seen in "the clear horizon". Both the passages speak of a past event, and their reference is clearly to the initial *waḥy* which the Prophet had given out to the Makkans and which both the passages emphasize was delivered by the entity he saw.

Also, the other versions of Al-Zuhrî's report, particularly that in *Bukhârî*, clearly speak of the delivery of the *iqra'* passage by Jibrîl who appeared before the Prophet for the purpose. Watt withholds from his readers this and the other versions of the report. In fact by doing so, and by all the other devices, namely, by arbitrarily dividing the version which he cites into so many artificial passages, by isolating "the call" from the "vision", by raising the queer question of their relationship and by making the untenable statement that no specific text was delivered during the vision Watt drives at his and his predecessors' main theory that the Qur'ânic revelation was not verbal but only in the nature of suggestions or ideas that came to the Prophet. Hence he further states that the "practical outcome of the vision" would be something like a "conviction that the passages were messages from God" and that the Prophet "was called upon to proclaim them publicly".[2]

Note the expression: "the passages were messages from God"; that is, the *passages* themselves were not from God, but only their *messages* were so. It

1. *Ibid.*
2. *Ibid.* p.45.

is not explained by Watt how the *messages* could have been received prior to the "vision", nor why Muḥammad (ﷺ), before he was sure that they were from God, should have formulated them into "passages". Nor does Watt mention any such pre-vision passage. He simply argues backward from his assumption, namely, that since the "vision" imparted a "conviction that the passages were messages from God", this "would presuppose that Muḥammad had already received some revelations" but had not been sure about their nature; "now he is informed or given an assurance about that".[1] One may easily detect that this is merely a repetition in another form of the Muir-Margoliouth-Bell theory of the Prophet's having received other Qur'ânic revelaions prior to the *iqra'* passage and that he subsequently thought those were from God.

"Alternatively", continues Watt, "the vision might be taken as a call to seek revelations, and Muḥammad may have known something about methods of inducing them". The theory of "inducing" of revelations, it may be recalled, is originaly Margoliouth's.[2] He of course relates it to the physical hardships and other symptoms that at times attended the coming of revelations to the Prophet. Watt does not refer to Margoliouth and introduces the allegation at the first opportunity, that of the beginning of the "call" and the "vision", with the absurd implication that Muḥammad (ﷺ), before he hardly began his mission, had already "known something about methods of inducing" revelations!

Watt does not, however, press this suggestion here; for, as we shall see presently, he would revert to it subsequently.[3] After having simply introduced the allegation he observes that "the former of the alternatives", that is, the outcome of the vision being only a conviction that the "passages" were "messages" from God, "is more probable"; for it is in line with the view, and here Watt specifically cites Bell, "that what was inspired or suggested to him was the practical line of conduct' which he in fact followed".[4] It may at once be pointed out that it is not only this particular expression, but the whole theory that the Qur'ânic *waḥy* does not mean verbal communication of a text, but "suggestion", or "inspiration", etc., which is Bell's and others' and which Watt simply undertakes to substantiate by some means or other. So far as

1. *Ibid.*
2. See *supra*, p. 411.
3. *Infra*, pp. 498-500.
4. Watt, op. cit., p. 45.

this particular view is concerned, however, its untenability has been demonstrated earlier.[1]

Watt finally says that if "the purport of the vision was something general", that would agree with passage B. He then says that the words "Thou art the Messenger of God" were probably "not an exterior locution", nor even "an imaginative locution, but an intellectual locution", meaning that it was a "communication" which was made "without words. The form of words may even be much later than the actual vision".[2]

These statements in fact constitute an admission on Watt's part that the "original call" and the "vision" are not really two distinct events, as he has hitherto implied, but are aspects of the same incident described in passage B. Having recognized that he realizes that the expression "Thou art the Messenger of God", though not a passage of the Qur'ân, nonetheless consists of "words" constituting a statement which was communicated to the Prophet during the "vision" described in passage B. Hence Watt hastens to say that these words were probably "an intellectual locution". Now observe his peculiar logic. He asserts that there is nothing to show that the communication of any specific text accompanied the "vision"; but now that he cannot deny that the passage B, which he has isolated from the rest of the account, also speaks of the communication of some "words", Hence he tells his readers that these "words" were communicated "without words"— an intellectual locution! The fact is that his statement that the communication of no specific text accompanied the "vision" is belied and contradicted even by his passage B. Moreover, by saying that the "form of the words may even be much later than the actual vision" he makes an arbitrary assumption which is nowhere warranted by the sources, neither directly, nor indirectly. In doing so he also casts doubt on the authenticity of passage B. As we have seen, he casts doubt on passages D and I because they mention Jibrîl which fact does not fit in with his assumption. Now he implies incorrectness even in passage B because there is the mention of the communication of the words "Thou art the Messenger of God", which fact contradicts his other assumption. Yet he would have us believe that his assumptions are supported by these very passages!

Even after such manoeuvres Watt cannot escape the fact that the *iqra'*

1. See *supra*, pp. 430-339.

2. Watt, *op. cit.*, p. 456. He refers here to the work of A. Poulain and to section 5 where the expression "intellectual locution", etc., are explained.

passage, including his passages D & E, was by all accounts communicated during a "vision". Hence he proceeds to deal with it under his fourth sub-heading which is as follows:

V: "RECITE"

Under this sub-heading Watt attempts to make three points in three successive paragraphs. In the first he refers to the "numerous versions of the tradition" regarding the revelation of *sûrat al-'alaq* and then, with reference to Al-Zuhrî's account, he says that the words *mâ aqra'u* occurring therein "must be translated 'I cannot read (or recite)"'; for there is the variant, *mâ 'anâ bi-qâri'in* in other versions and because, also, Ibn Hishâm makes a distinction between *mâ 'aqra'u* and *mâ dhâ 'aqra'u,* the latter expression meaning "Watt shall I recite?". Having said this Watt asserts: "This latter is also the more natural meaning for *mâ 'aqra'u.*" In support of this statement he levels an allegation against the traditionists in general saying: "It is almost certain that the latter traditionists avoided the natural meaning of the words" in order to sustain the "dogma that Muḥammad could not write, which was an important part of the proof of the miraculous nature of the Qur'ân."[1] He also cites 'Abd Allah ibn Shaddâd's report given in Al-Ṭabarî's *tafsir*,[2] saying that that "text requires that the *mâ* be taken as 'what', since it is preceded by 'and'."

Watt then reproduces in the second paragraph Bell's view that the words *qara'a* and *qur'ân* are taken from the religious vocabulary of the Syrian Christians and that *Qur'ân* means "reading" and "Scripture lesson".[3] Having said this Watt adds that while the verb *'iqra'* "later came to mean 'read, in this sûrah it presumably means 'recite from memory', namely, from the memory of what had been supernaturally communicated to him."[4]

Then, in the last paragraph of his text under this sub-heading Watt says that there "are no effective objections to the almost universal view of Muslim scholars that this is the first of the Qur'ân to be revealed." He then interprets this passage as "a command to worship" and, differing from Bell (who says that the passage was revealed when the Prophet had already gathered some followers) says that "it may very well belong to a stage before he began to preach to others." Nevertheless, insists Watt, the "possibility cannot be

1. *Ibid.*, p. 46.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*, p. 47, citing Bell, *Origin etc.*, 90 ff.
4. Watt, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

excluded" that the Prophet "had already received other messages which he did not regard as part of the Qur'ân; one example would be the words in the traditions "Thou art the Messenger of God'."[1]

Now, as regards the first point, it is clear that all that Watt says in this connection is intended to discredit the fact that the Prophet could not read or write. The question of his illiteracy and the orientalists' views about it have already been discussed.[2] It may only be pointed out here that the allegation of the later traditionists' having avoided what is called the "natural meaning" of the words *mâ 'aqra'u* is totally unwarranted. Nor is it a fact that the so-called "dogma" about the Prophet's illiteracy is a later development. The Qur'ân itself states:

﴿وما كنت تتلوا من قبله من كتـــب ولا تخطه بيمينك إذًا لارتاب المبطلون﴾

"You were not used before this (i.e.the giving out of the Qur'ân) to reading any book, nor to writing it with your right hand. In that case the detractors could have reason for doubting." (29:48).

What is called the "dogma" about the Prophet's illiteracy is thus based on this and similar other Qur'ânic statements and is *not* a later invention. Also, it is not true to say that the later traditionists avoided the so-called natural meaning of the words. Many of them indeed considered the different versions and the differences in the meanings of the expressions. Watt's insistence on what he calls the natural meaning of the words seems to have arisen from a confusion about the negative *mâ* and interrogative *mâ* in two versions.

What Watt says in his first paragraph is in fact rendered irrelevant by what he says in his second paragraph dealing with the origin and meaning of *'iqra'*. We need not dilate here on the question whether the expressions *iqra'* and Qur'ân are derived from the religious vocabulary of the Syrian Christians. Even according to Bell, whom Watt quotes, Qur'ân means "reading" or "Scripture lesson". But if, as Watt would have us believe, the verb *iqra'* only "later came to mean 'read"', and if in this passage of *sûrat al-'alaq* it is only a command to the Prophet to "recite from memory" what "had been communicated to him supernaturally", then the whole of Watt's previous remarks about the Prophet's illiteracy and the allegations against the traditionists are both irrelevant and unnecessary; for no reading or writing capacity is called

1. *Ibid.*
2. See *supra*, pp.241-250.

for if the task is simply to recite from memory. Obviously, Watt first assumes the meaning of reading for the verb and on that basis makes his above mentioned comments. He then changes his ground, rejects that meaning for the word and suggests that it only means a command to recite from memory, etc. Once again, he does not explain when and how Muḥammad (ﷺ) received the supernatural communications prior to the communication of the *'iqra'* passage, and what were those supposed pre-*'iqra'* passages or "messages for the passages" that were required to be recited? Clearly, Watt intends here to reiterate the old assumption of the receipt of revelations by the Prophet prior to what is called "the vision".

But once again Watt somewhat contradicts in his third paragraph what he says in the second. He states that there is no effective objections to the view that the *'iqra'* passage was the first part of the Qur'ân to be revealed. A strict adherence to this statement requires the rejection of the suggestion that there were pre-*'iqra'* passages revealed to the Prophet. Watt seems to have recognized the difficulty arising out of this last statement of his. Hence he insists at the end of the paragraph that Muḥammad (ﷺ) had of course "already received other messages which he did not regard as part of the Qur'ân", an example of that being the words "Thou art the Messenger of God".[1] This last statement is simply an attempt to sidetrack the issue. The discussion is here about the receipt of pre-*iqra'* passages or messages for the passages that formed part of the Qur'ân and that the Prophet was supposedly asked in the *'iqra'* passage to recite from memory, and not about what Watt himself recognizes to be no part of the Qur'ân. Moreover, if *waḥy*, as he and his preceptor Bell suggest, was only "inspiration" or "suggestion" for a "practical line of conduct" which the Prophet in fact followed, that could not conceivably be something to be "recited from memory"! The climax of contradiction comes, however, a couple of pages subsequently where Watt states that the "vision" and the address "thou art the Messenger of God" took place some three years *after* the "original call"[2] which, as Watt says here, is described in his passage B of Al-Zuhrî's account!

VI. "SÛRAT AL-MUDDATHTHIR: THE FATRAH"

Watt then passes on to his fifth sub-title. He starts this section by referring to Jâbir ibn 'Abd Allah al-Anṣâri's tradition which says that the opening

1. Watt, *op. cit.*, p. 47.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 49.

'âyahs of *sûrat al-Muddaththir* were the first revelation. Watt states that this could have been so only "if Muḥammad entered abruptly on his public ministry without any period of preparation"; for the passage contains the words "Rise and Warn" whereas the *'iqra'* passage does not contain any such directive and does not therefore "imply a public ministry". He therefore observes that "the most probable view" is that the passage of *sûrat al-Muddaththir* "marks the beginning of public ministry." In support of this statement he cites what Ibn Isḥâq says that the Prophet was ordered after three years of his commission to declare openly what had come to him from God.[1] As another evidence Watt refers to the tradition which says that for the first three years it was the angel "Asrafil" (Isrâfîl) who, in Watt's word, "mediated" the revelation to the Prophet. In this connection Watt refers also to "fatrah or gap in the revelation" and says that "az-Zuhrî introduces the *fatrah* in order to reconcile this tradition with the view that *Sûrat al-'alaq* came first."[2]

The distinction made by Watt between the "non-public ministry" and "public ministry" is clearly based on the distinction made by the Muslim scholars between *nubuwwah* (call to Prophethood) and *risâlah* (commission to preach). Muslim scholarly opinion is also more or less unanimous in saying that the opening passage of *sûrat al-Muddaththir* marks the inception of *risâlah*. But the identification of this distinction with what Ibn Isḥâq says about open preaching and with the Isrâfîl tradition is misleading. Ibn Isḥâq's statement is made not with reference to the distinction between *nubuwwah* and *risâlah* but with reference to what he suggests to be the initial period of unobtrusive or private preaching followed by the period of open preaching. The work of preaching is implied in both the periods. Nor does he relate his statement with the revelation of *sûrat al-Muddaththir* but with two other passages of the Qur'ân.[3] It may be noted that his characterization of the initial period as a period of secret preaching is not based on any specific authority, but on the vague assertion of "what we have come to know" (فيما بلغنا). Both aspects of his statement, namely, the nature of the initial period of preaching and its length need reexamination in the light of the other relevant facts.[4]

Watt makes a mistake in taking Ibn Isḥâq's statement as having been

1. *Ibid.*, p.48. See also Ibn Hishâm. I., p. 262.
2. Watt, *op. cit*, p. 48.
3. The two passages are 15:94 and 26:214.
4. *Infra*, Ch. XXI, sec. I.

made with reference to the distinction between what is called "the non-public ministry" and "public ministry". He seems to realize the difficulty arising out of this identification. Hence he states that "the precise nature of the difference" between the two, that is non-public and public ninistry, "is more difficult to say, since the first converts are said to have been made during the first period." There is in fact no difficulty in the matter. The difficulty is created by Watt's own faulty identification and, to a greater extent, by a careless English rendering of the essentially technical terms *nubuwwah* and *risâlah* as "non-public" and"public ministry." It is to be noted that *nubuwwah* is no "ministry" as such. The use of this term only illustrates the risk involved in transferring Christian theological terms to technical Islamic expressions.

The reference to the Isrâfîl tradition in this conection is also inappropriate. Whatever the tradition in question is worth, it relates neither to the distinction between *nubuwwah* and *risâlah* nor to what is called the period of secret preaching. It is also misleading to state, as Watt does, that the angel Isrâfîl used to "mediate", i.e., deliver, revelation to the Prophet for the first three years of his commission. The text of the tradition simply says that Isrâfîl was "attached" to the Prophet (قُرن بـ). There is no mention that that angel used to bring any *waḥy*. On the contrary it is specifically mentioned that the angel was so attached to the Prophet *prior* to the coming of *waḥy* to him (قرن برسول الله ﷺ قبل أن يُوحىٰ إليه).[1] The tradition in question, however, is *mursal*, i.e. its authority does not go upto the time of the Prophet. Al-Waqidî, who also mentions this tradition, categorically states that it is not reliable.[2]

Having thus spoken of the distinction between the "non-public" and "public ministry" Watt deals with the term *al-Muddaththir*. He says that it is commonly taken to meen "wrapped in a *dithâr* (or *dathar*), that is, a cloak" and that it had some connection with the receiving of revelations. As such, he observes, the act of being wrapped "may either be to induce revelations, or, more probably, to protect the human recepient from the danger of the Divine appearance." It must at once be pointed out that in none of the traditions is the act of being wrapped indicated to be what is called a means of "inducing revelations" or "to protect the human recepient from the danger of the Divine appearance". Watt simply twists the term to import in it the theory of "indu-

1. See Al-Ṭabarî, *Târîkh*, I.,1249.
2. Ibn Sa'd, I., p. 191. Also quoted in Al-Ṭabarî, *op. cit.*

cing revelations" and of "the vision of God".

More remarkable is Watt's suggestion about the metaphorical meaning of *al-Muddaththir*. He says that it means "a man who is obscure and of no reputation" and attempts to substantiate this implication by refering to what he calls "the standards by which the rich Meccans judged" the Prophet as "a comparatively unimportant person."[1] The allusion is obviously to Q. 43:31 wherein reference is made to the rich Makkans' attempt to belittle the Prophet when he began to preach the truth to them. True, he was not one of the leaders of his society when "the call" took place; but the term *al-Muddaththir* by no means implies "an obscure person". Nor was he in any way an "obscure" person before "the call". It is common knowledge that a cognate word may acquire a metaphorical sense. The rule in such a case is that the metaphorical meaning is strictly confined to the particular form, and not to any other form or derivative from the root, since the root word does not have that sense. Now, one of the forms derived from *dathâr* is *dathûr* (دثور). This form does sometime bear the sense of an obscure person;[2] but it would be a violence to the rules of the language to transfer that sense to another derivation such as *muddaththir*. In none of the standard Arabic dictionaries is that sense given to this form. Moreover, it is quite contrary to common sense that in the *'âyah* under reference God would address His Messenger in such a derogatory term, or that the Prophet would apply it to himself!

Thus having dealt with the question of "non-public" and "public ministry", the question of *fatrah* and the meanning of *al-muddaththir* Watt summarizes the "picture" as follows. He says that there was "a preparatory stage in Muḥammad's career as prophet, lasting three years." During this period he received the first part of *sûrat al-'Alaq, sûrat al-Ḍuḥâ* and other revelations of "a more private character". Watt again refers here to the Israfil tradition. He then says that the *fatrah* might be placed at the end of this period and that then the "visions" or the first of them took place, together with the giving of the title "Messenger of God" and the revelation of *sûrat al-Muddaththir*.[3]

Thus does Watt completely reverse the position with which he started. He started by saying that *al-ru'yâ al-ṣâdiqah* in the pre-Ḥirâ' period was the

1. Watt, *op. cit.*, p.49.
2. See *Tâj al-'Arûs*, III, p. 202.
3. Watt, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

same type of "vision" as that experienced by the Prophet subsequently. Then Watt says that the "vision" at Ḥirâ', which is described in passage B of Al-Zuhrî's account was a "vision of God" because, among other things, there is the mention of *al-ḥaqq* in that connection. Then he states that passage B describes the "original call" and implies that the "vision" was something independent of "the call", taking place subsequently and that its purport was something general, namely, reassuring the Prophet of his new position and imparting to him the conviction that "the passages were messages from God." Yet, on the basis of this supposed purport of the "vision" Watt says that it would "fit in well with passage B", thereby once again implying that the subject-matter of that passage is "the vision" and that it was incidental to "the original call". It is also on that basis that he asserts, a little while ago, that the address "Thou art the Messenger of God" was the sort of non-Qur'ânic revelation which the Prophet had received prior to the receipt of the *'iqra'* passage. And now Watt completely reverses the position saying that even the "first" vision took place after three years of the Prophet's career and that the title Messenger of God was given then, that is, the communication "Thou art the Mseenger of God" took place not before that of the *'iqra'* passage but long *after* it!

These confusions and inconsistencies could easily have been averted if Watt had not set his mind from the start to prove that the so-called "vision" as also *waḥy* were only matters of the Prophet's mind and intellect, for which purpose Watt has divided Al-Zuhrî's rather continuous account into so many artificial passages and, among other devices, has equated *nubuwwah* and *risâlah* with "non-public ministry" and "public ministry", identifying the former with the so-called period of secret preaching mentioned by Ibn Isḥâq and with the dubious period of Isrâfîl's alleged companionship with the Prophet. It is because of this wrong identification that Watt finds it difficult to understand the real nature of what he calls the period of non-public ministry because there were "conversions before Muḥammad publicly claimed to be God's Messenger". And on account of this difficulty of his own creation Watt proceeds to entertain "suspicion that too much is ascribed to the preparatory stage in the traditional accounts."[1] If Watt had not attempetd to misinterpret and "tendentially" shape the sources for the above mentioned purpose he could have seen that despite the variations in the reports "the call"

1. *Ibid.*

and "the vision" took place simultaneously, that the Qur'ânic *waḥy* was verbal communication of specific texts, that the *fatrah* or pause in the coming of *waḥy* was an event of the initial period, that it lasted not for years but only for days or weeks, as he himself appears to recognize,[1] and that the *risâlah* or commission to preach and the revelation of *sûrat al-Muddaththir* and other *sûrahs* took place not very long after the original call. There is thus also no need to be suspicious about the conversions that took place during the first three years or so of the Prophet's career.

VII. 'MUḤAMMAD'S FEAR AND DESPAIR'

Watt next passes on to his sixth sub-title given above. He starts by saying that "the passages from az-Zuhri" speak of two types of fear and despair: "Firstly, fear because of the appearance or presence of the Divine (C, F, J); and despair which led to thoughts of suicide (D,I)."[1]

Before proceeding further with Watt's other statements in this connection it should be observed at the outset that the passages, though they undoubtedly speak about "fear", do in no way speak about "the appearance or presence of the Divine." Passage J, for instance, which Watt cites here as indicating the appearance of the Divine, unequivoccally says, in Watt's own translation, "...I saw the angel who used to come to me at Ḥirâ' on a throne (*kursî*) between the heaven and the earth. I was stricken with fear of him."[2] Therefore it was the sight of the angel, not of the Divine, which caused the fear. It would be manifestly inconsistent to adduce the evidence of the passage in support of the "appearance" or "presence" and then to assume, in disregard of the clear statement of that very passage, that the entity appearing was something else. Secondly, in interpreting the passage of *sûrat al-Najm* Watt states that while Muḥammad's (ﷺ) eyes saw "one of the greatest signs of his Lord", the "heart perceived the thing symbolized". We have pointed out the mistake in this interpretaion; but according to Watt's own admission what the Prophet had seen with his eyes was a "sign" or "symbol" of God, not God Himself. It was this physical sight, this ocular experience, of the sign of God, i.e., of the angel, which caused the fear. After all, what is spiritual or intellectual, or what the "heart perceived" could not have been a matter for fear. Thirdly, both Bell and Watt say that the Prophet, after having

1. *Ibid.*, p. 48.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 49-50.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 41.

mistakenly claimed to have had a "vision" of God, subsequently modified his position not only in *sûrat al-Najm* but also elsewhere holding that human sight could not reach God. If it had been so, he could not have later on given an impression to any one that he had seen God. Now, the passages from Al-Zuhri, whether regarded as a narration of 'Â'ishah or of others, are obviously later than this supposed modification of his position by the Prophet. Hence neither 'Â'ishah (r.a.) nor any other subsequent reporter could have got the impression that the "vision" was in any way that of God. To interpret the passages as giving that impression would thus be simply anachronistic.

To proceed with the other statements of Watt. In connection with this question of fear caused supposedly by the appearance or presence of the Divine Watt states that according to the testimony of the Old Testament the fear of the near approach of the Divine has deep roots in the Semitic consciousness. The passages C & J which mention this fear, he observes,"seem to be mainly" explanations of the expression *al-muzzammil* in 73:1 and they suggest "that the later exegetes were merely inferring the presence of fear from the Qur'ân, and had no information about it apart from the Qur'ân."[1] Watt further says that the "awkward transition from *zammilûnî* to *muddaththir*" shows that the exegetes inferred the connection of *al-muzzammil*, which was not originally so, with the story of Muḥammad's (ﷺ) call. If therefore, argues Watt, "it seemed natural to these later exegetes to take *muzzammil* in this way, this fear of the onset of the Divine must have been widespread" and the Prophet "may well have shared in it."[2]

Now, Watt says that the later exegetes merely inferred "the presence of fear from the Qur'ân, and had no information about it apart from the Qur'ân". There is, however, no indication whatsoever in the Qur'ân about the fear. All that the *sûrahs al-Muzzammil* and *al-Muddaththir* indicate is that the Prophet is addressed by these titles and asked either to get up and pray at night or to rise up and warn, etc. Even *sûrat al-Najm*, which speaks of the "vision", does not contain any indication of the Prophet's having been at any time struck with fear. How could the later exegetes then have inferred "the presence of fear from the Qur'ân" if they "had no information about it apart from the Qur'ân"? The fact is that Watt here implicitly slips into Bell's view that the traditions are fabrications of a later age to explain the Qur'ânic statements. At the same time Watt founds his remarks on the fact of fear,

1. *Ibid.*, p. 50.
2. *Ibid.*

information about which is supplied only by the traditions and not at all by the Qur'ân. Watt's argument is, however, fallacions and round-about. It was the later exegetes who had no information about the fear, who inferred it from the Qur'ân and also inferred the connection of the expression *muzzammil* with the story of the Prophet's "call", and since they made this inference, the "fear at the onset of the Divine" must have been "widespread"; and as it was widespread, "Muḥammad may well have shared in it." Clearly Watt here first makes an unwarranted and incorrect assumption and then argues backward on the basis of that assumption to prove the existence of widespread fear at the "onset" or "near-approach" of the Divine in which the Prophet might have shared. In thus arguing Watt in effect turns the table on his preceptor Bell. For the latter would have us believe that Muḥammad (ﷺ) in his "ignorance" initially "claimed" that he had a vision of God; but Watt now tells us that the notion of the onset or near-approach of the Divine and the attendant fear was "widespread" and the Prophet only shared in it!

We are not, however, concerned here with the Old Testament information on the matter. We should only point out that in the second and third centuries of Islam, when the exegetes are alleged to have invented the traditions to provide explanations for the Qur'ânic statements, the so-called Old Testament notion and fear about the onset of the Divine could hardly have been in circulation, not to speak of being widespread, in the Islamic land. And for the reasons mentioned above, those exegetes could not have conceived the idea of a "vision" of God, particularly as both Bell and Watt themselves take care to note that the "Islamic orthodoxy" about it had already been crystallized by then. Nor can one conceivably read back a supposedly widespread third-century notion into a period prior even to the onset of that era.

As regards the second theme, namely, "despair" leading to "thoughts of suicide" Watt finds also its parallel "among the Old Testament prophets and from the lives of the Christian saints". To substantiate this parallellism he quotes what A. Poulain reproduces of St. Teresa of Avila's feelings as to "whether the locutions" she received "came from the devil or from the imagination" etc.[1] Watt then observes that the thought of suicide could hardly have been attributed to Muḥammad (ﷺ) "unless he said something which gave a basis" for it and that such "a period of despair would fit in with the accounts of the *fatrah*".[2]

1. *Ibid.*
2. *Ibid.*

The analogy drawn here by Watt is completely inappropriate. For the statement of St. Teresa of Avila, which he quotes from A. Poulain's work, speaks only of her having hovered between faith and doubt as to whether the locutions were from God, from the devil or from imagination and of her at last being convinced that they were from God, "which she would have died to defend". The "despair" which could be dimly discerned here relates to the doubt about the real origin of the "locutions". Muḥammad's (ﷺ) despair, on the other hand, was not at all due to any doubts about the origin of what he had received, but solely because the coming of that thing had temporarily stopped. His case is thus completely different from that of St. Teresa of Avila. The analogy drawn by Watt with the Old Testament prophets and Christian saints seems to be purposeful; for, as we shall presently see, he ultimately suggests that the Islamic *waḥy* is comparable to the "inspiration" of the Christian prophets and saints — they received the "inspiration" (i.e. ideas) from God and then wrote down in their own words what they had understood through the "inspiration". Needless to point out, the concept of Qur'ânic *waḥy* is totally different. Incidentally, the quotation given here by Watt from A. Poulain's work appears to be another step towards using that writer's matrix to cast Islamic *waḥy* into it, as Watt finally does.

As regards the remark that Muḥammad (ﷺ) must have said something which provided a basis for the attribution of the thought of suicide to him, it has already been pointed out[1] that this statement of Al-Zuhrî is a conjecture on his part. Even Watt recognizes that Al-Zuhrî's statement in connection with the *fatrah* is his "conjecture".[2] The *fatrah* and the Prophet's despair on account of that are of course facts. His having mentioned this despair and his frequenting the hills in expectation of again meeting the angel appear to have provided the basis for this conjecture. Whatever might be the duration of the *fatrah* and the intensity of the Prophet's despair of account of that, they both emphatically illustrate the fact that *waḥy* was not something emanating from his own consciousness. It was none of his imaginative / intellectual locution. Had it been so, there would have been no *fatrah* and no resultant despair.

VIII. "ENCOURAGEMENT FROM KHADÎJAH AND WARAQAH"

Watt begins his discussion under this last sub-heading of his by stressing that there is "no reason for rejecting the account of how Khadîjah reassured

1. *Supra*, pp. 373-375, 384-385.
2. Watt, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

Muḥammad". It shows, continues Watt, that "Muḥammad was lacking in self-confidence at this stage". He further says, contradicting in effect Bell's view on the subject, that "there is no strong reason for doubting the authenticity "of the pharse about the *nâmûs*. Its use, "instead of the Qur'ânic Tawrah", argues Watt, is an argument for its genuineness. Watt then says that the reassurance from Waraqah was important. It encouraged Muḥammad (ﷺ) to "put the highest construction on his experiences". As such it was "of great importance in his interior development". It also shows that initially he "was of a hesitant nature". The rest of the story, observes Watt, "seems to be an attempt to explain why Waraqah, though he approved Muḥammad, did not become a Muslim".[1]

It has already been pointed out[2] that the use of the expression *nâmûs* is rather a conclusive evidence in favour of the genuineness of the account. Watt does not explain why the subsequent narrators or reporters should have been interested in defending Waraqah and in explaining why he did not become a Muslim. If they had really added to or modified the account, they would more naturally have done so in respect of those aspects of the account that, as Watt states, show their Prophet to be "lacking in self-confidence" and "of a hesitant nature". The fact is that neither the one nor the other part of the account is a later addition "from inference or imagination". The account as a whole illustrates the fact that, whatever might have been the motive behind the Prophet's solitary stay at Ḥirâ', and whatever might have been the nature of *taḥannuth*, the coming of *waḥy* was unexpected and surprising to him and that he did neither plan nor make any preparations for giving himself out as a Prophet to his people.

Like Bell, Watt thinks that the word *nâmûs* is derived from the Greek *nomos* and means "the law or revealed scriptures". Waraqah's remarks, says Watt, would thus have been made after Muḥammad (ﷺ) "had started to receive revelations" and they meant that what had come to him "was to be identified or at least classed with the Jewish and Christian scriptures" and that he "should be founder or legislator of a community".[3]

Waraqah's remarks were of course made after the Prophet had received the first revelation, not "revelations". Had he already received a number of

1. *Ibid.*, p. 51.
2. *Supra*, pp. 425-426.
3. Watt, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

revelations he would have been familiarized with the affair, the initial surprise or uncertainty would have been over and there would have been no reason for his going to Waraqah for consultation. On the other hand, if Waraqah had meant to say what Watt thinks he had meant, then there were deeper reasons for his doing so. It is just not conceivable that an intelligent, knowledgeable and experienced individual like Waraqah, after only listening to an unusual story from a junior acquaintance and relative of his, would jump to the conclusion that a law or scripture comparable to those of the Jews and Christians had started coming to him. Waraqah must have been sure of two things before he made the reported remarks. He must have got an impression from a study of the old scriptures that they contained indications of the coming of another Messenger and of other revelations upon him. Waraqah must also have been convinced, from a knowledge of the character and antecedent of Muḥammad (ﷺ) that he possessed the quality of being such a Messenger. Hence, when he disclosed his unusual experience to Waraqah, he immediately came to the conclusion that what he had learnt from the old scriptures about the coming of a Prophet and another revelation had come to pass and that Muḥammad (ﷺ) the faithful, the trustworthy and the truthful was the recepient of that divine commission and revelation.

Whatever the origin and meaning of the expression *nâmûs*, it, as used by Waraqah, had no doubt reference to what had come to Muḥammad (ﷺ). And that reference was not simply to the "words" he had received, but also to the unusual circumstance in which they were received. This unusual circumstance was the appearance of the entity who had delivered the words. It was this "appearance" which caused Muḥammad's (ﷺ) surprise and bewilderment and which brought him and his wife to the wise man of the community in search of an explanation. Had Muḥammad (ﷺ) simply "heard" the words, or had it been an "interior locution", imaginative or intellectual, there would hardly have been any reason for surprise and fear. The "appearance" or "vision" is thus the central feature of the beginning of "the call". *Nâmûs* had reference to this feature as well as to the words that were received.

Waraqah's use of the expression *nâmûs* is significant in another respect. It is clear from all the accounts that the very first persons to whom Muḥammad (ﷺ) disclosed his unusual experience were Khadîjah and Waraqah. Had he "claimed" or "interpreted" or supposed his "vision" to be one of God, Waraqah, with his knowledge of the Jewish and Christian scriptures, would have

straightway dismissed it as imagination and mistake and would not have left it for Muḥammad (ﷺ) or for any twentieth century scholar to subsequently find out the mistake. Nor is *nâmûs*, whatever its origin and meaning, applicable to a "vision of God".

After having stressed the importance of Waraqah's reassurance Watt says that the concluding words of the "first" revelation, "Who taught by the pen, Taught man what he did not know", refer "almost certainly" to "previous revelations". By "previous revelations" Watt means the Old and the New Testament and argues that there is no point in telling the Prophet that God "taught the use of pen" if he could neither read nor write. And since he was in close contact with Waraqah who "is outstanding for his study of the Christian scriptures", Muḥammad (ﷺ) had learnt from him "much of a general character". When therefore he repeated the passage it must "have reminded him of what he owed to Waraqah". "Later Islamic conceptions", concludes Watt, "may have been largely moulded by Waraqah's ideas, e.g. of the relation of Muḥammad's revelation to previous revelations".[1]

It needs hardly any mentioning that there is rarely any orientalist who, whenever there is an occasion to refer to the well-known story of the Prophet's consultation with Waraqah, fails to make use of it for pressing the view that the former learnt much from the latter for producing the Qur'ân and Islam. That general theme of borrowing from the previous religious systems, particularly from Judaism and Christianity, has been dealt with previously.[2] Here we may only make some observations on Watt's above mentioned remarks. The statement "Who taught by the pen" or "Who taught the use of pen" (there is very little difference in the sense in the two forms of translation) is not meant simply to emphasize that particular skill. The passage as a whole emphasizes, as mentioned before, man's origin and creation on the one hand, and the most important element in his mental and intellectual development, namely, his knowledge and intelligence. Nothing could be a better start for the revelation than to remind man that he owed his origin and creation, as well as the quality which distinguished him from the rest of the creation, his knowledge and intelligence, to God alone. In this sense the mention of pen here is figurative. On the other hand it also signifies that what was being revealed to the Prophet was the beginning of a 'scripture'

1. *Ibid.*, pp. 51-52.
2. *Supra*, chapter XI.

which was to be preserved and transmitted by means of reading and recitation as well as by means of the pen, it mattered not whether the Prophet himself possessed the skill of writing or not. Watt's main argument here, however, leads us nowhere. If the *iqra'* passage, as Watt suggests, only reminded Muḥammad (ﷺ) when he repeated it "of what he owed to Waraqah", then there would have been no reason for his going to Waraqah for an explanation of the whole matter. On the other hand, if Waraqah had taught so many things, he would not have made the remaks he did; he would simply have said that this was what he had so long been teaching Muḥammad (ﷺ) and that he had after all realized the truth. While suggesting that the Prophet had learnt a good deal from Waraqah, Watt and the other orientalists do not ask themselves this simple question: Why should Waraqah have been privy to Muḥammad's (ﷺ) plans for producing a new scripture and a new religion? They seem to have avoided also the question whether it would not have been far more sensible on the Prophet's part to learn reading and thus himself acquire a knowledge of the old scriptures and make his own plans and preparations, than to let others know his secrets. Again, if "later Islamic conceptions", such as "the relation of Muḥammad's revelation to previous revelations" were moulded by Waraqah's ideas, such ideas the latter must have obtained from his study of the previous scriptures. The Islamic conception would thus be only in line with the teachings of the Old and the New Testament, and in that case the orientalists should find no difficulty in acknowledging the truth and reasonableness of the particular concept, namely, the fundamental unity and relationship of all the revealed scriptures. If "by later Islamic conceptions" is meant that the conception of "the relation of Muḥammad's revelation to previous revelations" was developed after the time of the Prophet, then the statement would be totally wrong; for that relationship is very much emphasized in the Qur'ân itself, and that also in such an early passage as 87:18-19 which clearly states: "Verily this is in the early scriptures, the scriptures of Ibrâhîm and Mûsâ". If, on the other hand, by "later" is meant that the Prophet subsequently related his "revelation to previous revelations", then the point is very much admitted by himself, and there is no need to take all the troubles to prove it. In fact the need is far more to look into the question of what he claimed to be different or new in the revelation he received or claimed that what he received was also contained in the past revelations but had been lost on account of human fault or error.

CHAPTER XX

WAḤY AND THE ORIENTALISTS: IV. THE THEORY OF INTELLECTUAL LOCUTION

In the final section of his treatment of the subject under caption: *The form of Muḥammad's Prophetic consciousness*, Watt summarizes his as well as his predecessors' views. As a preliminary to his doing this he points out the West's awareness, since the time of Carlyle, of the Prophet's sincerity and, like Bell, stresses the need to "hold firmly to the belief of his sincerity until the opposite is conclusively proved". He then expresses his intention to remain neutral with regard to the different views about the Qur'ân held by the orthodox Muslim, the Western secularist and the modern Christian, saying that he would, out of courtesy, use the expression "the Qur'ân says" and not "Muḥammad says", but if he speaks "of a passage being revealed to Muḥammad" this should not be taken as an acceptance of the Muslim point of view and the reader should "supply 'as the Muslims say' or some such phrase'".[1]

I. WATT'S MATRIX: A. POULAIN'S THEORY

After these preliminaries Watt introduces A. Poulain's definitions of "locution" and "vision" as given in his book, *Graces of Interior Prayer*.[2] According to that writer, says Watt, "locution" and "vision" may each be either "exterior" or "interior". "Exterior locutions" are "words heard by the ear, though not produced naturally". Similarly "exterior visions" are "visions of material objects, or what seem to be such, perceived by the bodily eyes". "Interior locution" and "interior vision" may each be either "imaginative" or "intellectual". "Imaginative locutions" are received directly by the imaginative sense, without the assistance of the ear. An "intellectual louction", on the other hand, is "a simple communication of thought without words, and consequently without any definite language".[3] With this "equipment" Watt turns "to the Qur'ân and the traditional accounts".

Before seeing how Watt uses this equipment it would be worthwhile to indicate the inherent inconsistency in his approach. He professes to remain

1. Watt, *M. at M.*, 52-53.
2. London,1928.
3. Watt, *op. cit.*, p. 54, citing A. Poulain, *op. cit.*, pp. 299 ff.

neutral with regard to the theological questions and to refrain from expressing any theological opinion. But having said so he immediately turns to what is avowedly a book on "mystical theology" dealing essentially with "interior" prayer and the experiences of Christian saints and mystics, in order to explain Qur'ânic *waḥy* or what he calls "the form of Muḥammad's prophetic consciousness". Secondly, he declares that he would not deny "any fundamental Islamic belief". In practice, however, he immediately proceeds to do just the opposite thing, that is to show that the Qur'ânic *waḥy* fits in with A. Poulain's definition of "intellectual locution", that is, it is a "simple communication of thought without words" etc. This is nothing but a denial of, if not an affront to, the most fundamental Islamic belief that the Qur'ânic *waḥy* is *not* a "simple communication of thought without words" and that it was *not* a form of Muḥammad's (ﷺ) consciousness, normal or supra-normal. The fact is that Watt has introduced A. Poulain's equipment only to prove the usual Christian missionary and orientalist point of view, more particularly the view of Bell, but only in an intellectual garb. It is understandable that being a sincere Christian Watt cannot conscientiously subscribe to the Muslim point of view. But being no doubt aware of what he actually wanted to do it would have been better for him if he had not committed himself to neutrality and undertaken not to deny any fundamental Islamic belief.

II. WATT'S APPLICATION OF THE THEORY CONSIDERED

Having introduced Poulain's definition Watt refers briefly to the "manners" (*kayfiyât*) of revelation as mentioned in Al-Suyûṭi's *Itqân* and other sources and says that the main types are described, however, in the Qur'ânic passage 42:50-52. He translates this passage as follows: "It belongeth not to any human being that God should speak to him except by suggestion (*waḥyan*) or from behind a veil, Or by sending a messenger to suggest (*fa-yûḥiya*) by His permission what He pleaseth... Thus We have suggested to thee a spirit belonging to Our affair (*awḥaynâ*)".[1]

"The first manner therefore", continues Watt, "is where God speaks by *waḥy*". He then states three things. He refers to Bell who, it is said, after studying the various uses of the term *waḥy* in the Qur'ân has shown that at least in its early portions the word means not verbal communication of a text, but "suggestion", "prompting" or "inspiration" coming into a person's mind[2]. Second, Watt says that for "most of the Meccan period" *waḥy* was "the work

1. Watt, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

of the Spirit". He cites in support of this statement 26:192-194 which he translates as: "Verily it is the revelation (*tanzîl*) of the Lord of the Worlds, With which hath come down (*nazala bi-hi*) the Faithful Spirit Upon thy heart, that thou mayest be of those who warn". Watt adds here that the mention of angels bearing a message "is apparently later". Thirdly, he says that so far as he has noticed there is no mention "during the Meccan period" of "the Prophet 'hearing' What is brought down to him". On these grounds Watt says that "the Spirit" introduced "the message into Muḥammad's heart or mind by some method other than speaking to him" and that this would then be "an interior locution, and probably an intellectual one".[1]

Now, the passage 42:51-52 does indeed describe the main manners in which God communicates His words to man. Watt's translation of this passage is, however, both inaccurate and misleading. The rendering of *waḥy* and *awḥâ* as "suggestion" and "suggested" is, as we have shown earlier,[2] wrong. Watt does well here to refer to Bell and his conclusion about the meaning of the term *waḥy*. We have previously discussed his article in detail and have shown that his suggestion of "suggestion" etc. being the meaning of the term is very much wrong and inapplicable in the case of Qur'ânic *waḥy*. That the expression "suggestion" cannot be appropriate in every place where the term *waḥy* or its derivatives occur would be evident even from the passage which Watt has translated here. Thus, even if for argument's sake we employ "suggestion" for *waḥyan* in the first clause of the passage, the same expression cannot be accurate in translating *fa yûḥiya* in the second clause (i.e., "by sending a messenger to suggest [?] by His permission...)". In this latter case what the messenger does, because he is only a messenger and not a delegate or deputy, is really not that he "suggests", but only conveys or delivers what is God's *waḥy*. Thus *yûḥiya* in this instance means "conveys" or "delivers" and not "suggests", as Watt translates it. He is also confusing in translating *'âyah* 52 as "Thus We have suggested to thee a spirit belonging to Our affair". How a "spirit belonging to Our affair" could be "suggested" is not easily understandable. Nor would the meaning of the expression be clear. The meaning of the expression *min 'amrinâ* here is "by Our command". But even if we accept Watt's translation of this expression, *rûḥ* here is admittedly the object of the verb *'awḥaynâ*, that is *rûḥ* is something which has been

1. *Ibid*., p. 55.
2. *Supra*, pp. 430-432.

waḥy-ied. In other words *rûḥ* here means *waḥy* as object, not as verb. The nature of the object is clarified in the concluding part of the *'âyah* which runs: "You did not know what the Book is, nor the faith, but We have made it a light wherewith We guide whomsoever of Our servants We will..."[1] This explanatory clause shows clearly that the *rûḥ* mentioned previously is the Book, i.e., the text of the Book (Qur'ân), which was *wahy*-ied to the Prophet.

As regards Watt's second argument that for most of the Makkan period *waḥy* was the "work of the Spirit" and that angels are mentioned as messengers "apparently" later, he is mistaken in two ways. His citing of the passage 26:192-194 in this connection shows that he has misunderstood the sense of the passage as a whole and also the meaning of "the faithful spirit" (*al-rûḥ al-'amîn*). Watt is speaking here about the first manner, i.e., "where God speaks by *waḥy*", and not about the other manners, namely, speaking from "behind the veil" or by "sending a messenger". The passage in question, however, relates to this last mentioned manner, and not at all to the first manner. It appears that Watt has taken "the faithful spirit" here in the sense of God. Hence he has cited the passage as illustrative of the first manner of *waḥy* and has also capitalized the first letters of the words "faithful" and "spirit". In doing so he appears to have imported a theological concept peculiar to Christianity into the explanation of a Qur'ânic expression. He disregards or fails to understand the implication of the first *'âyah* of the passage under reference. It speaks of the Qur'ân as a *tanzîl*, i.e., something "sent-down", and the sender is the "Lord of the Worlds". The next *'âyah* mentions the agency which brought it down — "with which hath come down (*nazala bihi*) the faithful spirit". The faithful spirit is thus the messenger who brought it down. Incidentally, it may be observed that Watt has translated the word *tanzîl*, which clearly stands here for the Qur'ânic *waḥy*, as "revelation", apparently because he cannot by any stretch of the imagination apply the word "suggestion" here. Even his proviso that the reader should supply "as the Muslims say" or any such phrase is inapplicable in the present instance.

As regards the expression "the faithful spirit" it has already been shown[2] that it is the same as *rasûl karîm* mentioned in 69:40 and 81:19. In the latter place (81:21) he is described also as *'amîn*, and that he is very much an

1. The Arabic text runs as follows:

﴿ ... ما كنت تدرى ما الكتـٰب ولا الإيمـٰن ولـٰكن جعلنـٰه نوراً نهدى به من نشآء من عبادنا ... ﴾ (٤٢ : ٥٢)

2. *Supra*, pp. 419-422, 454-457.

angel. This also negatives Watt's claim that "angels" are spoken of as messengers only "later". It should further be noted that nowhere in the Qur'ân is *al-'amîn* mentioned as an attribute or name of God; nor is the adjective, 'the faithful', ever applied to the "spirit" which the Christians consider as an aspect of the "Trinity". The term *rûḥ* has been used in the Qur'ân in various senses, namely, spirit of life, angel and, as just seen in 42:50-52, in the sense of *waḥy* as object.

Watt's third argument is that there is no mention in the Makkan period "of the Prophet 'hearing' what is brought down to him". Of course neither in the Makkan nor in the Madinan passages of the Qur'ân is there any mention that the Prophet "heard" a revelation. This is so because the Qur'ân is not the Prophet's composition. But if one looks with a little care one would not miss that the author of the Qur'ân, God, instructs the Prophet at the very initial stage how to receive revelations and repeatedly asks him to listen carefully to what is recited to him before hastening to recite and repeat it. "Do not move your tongue in order to hasten with it. It is upon Us (to see) its recollection and recitation. So when We have it recited, then repeat its recitation/reading". (75:16-18).[1] The same instruction is repeated in 20:114, "And be not in haste with the Qur'ân before its communication to you is completed".[2] Of similar import, again, is 87:6, "We shall enable you to recite / read it; so you shall not forget it".[3] These are all early Makkan passages and they contain unmistakable exhortations to the Prophet to first listen to the recitation of the Qur'ân and then recite it. Indeed the Qur'ân, as both Bell and Watt recognize, means reading/recitation. Needless to point out that nothing is suitable for reading or recitation, even if "from memory", but a specific text. And God unequivocally says in the Qur'ân that He has sent it down as a "recitation, in Arabic", "Verily We have sent it down as a recitation/reading, in Arabic..."[4]

Watt seems to use the expression *'alâ qalbika* (upon thy heart) in the passage 26:192-193 to mean that *waḥy* was some "suggestion" or idea. The expression in question does in no way imply that sense; for it is immediately added that what is delivered is in "clear Arabic tongue" (26:194 بلسان عربيٍّ مبين),

1. The Arabic text runs as follows:
﴿لا تحرك به لسانك لتعجل به * إن علينا جمعه وقرءانه * فإذا قرأنـه فاتبع قرءانه﴾
2. The Arabic text runs as follows: ﴿... ولا تعجل بالقرءان من قبل أن يقضى إليك وحيه ...﴾
3. The Arabic text is: ﴿سنقرئك فلا تنسى﴾
4. 12:2, ﴿إنا أنزلنـه قرءنا عربيا ...﴾. See also 12:113; 39:28; 41:3; 42:7 and 43:3.

thus removing any ground for doubting the nature of what is delivered. In fact the expression *'alâ qalbika* is intended to emphasize that the text thus delivered was transfixed in the Prophet's heart, i.e., mind and brain, by God's will so that he would not forget it. It has the same sense as is expressed in 75:17 ("It is upon Us its recollection and recitation" and in 87:6 ("We shall enable you to read it, so you shall not forget it"). In fact, "to get by heart" is a familiar English phrase for committing to memory. All our knowledge of mother or foreign tongue, not to speak of any specific text or group of words, is in the ultimate analysis such getting by heart of each and every word of the vocabulary of the respective language or languages, as makes us not feel, when we see or use them, that we are merely reproducing them from our memory (i.e., heart). The expression *'alâ qalbika* in the passage under reference has this sense of transfixing in the Prophet's 'heart', and not the sense of "suggestion" or ideas communicated to him.

In connection with this discussion about the first manner of *waḥy* Watt cites the *ḥadîth* of Al-Ḥârith ibn Hîshâm[1] in which the Prophet is reported as saying that sometimes *waḥy* used to come to him like the reverberation of a bell (صلصلة الجرس). Watt says that this is "quite compatible" with the first manner and that it was "doubtless an imaginative experience", an "intellectual locution". He states: "The hearing of the bell is doubtless an imaginative experience, but there is no mention of hearing anyone speaking or of hearing words spoken, not even imaginatively. On the contrary, at the end of the experience he [the Prophet] appears simply to find the words of the revelation in his heart. It is fairly clear that,... this is a description of an intellectual locution".[2]

It should at once be pointed out that Watt is not quite correct in thus relating this manner of *waḥy* to what he calls the first manner, i.e., *waḥy* coming without the instrumentality of the angel; for in another version of the same report in *Bukhârî* it is specifically mentioned that this was also a manner in which *waḥy* was delivered by the angel.[3] Watt also misstates the case when he says: "The hearing of the bell is doubtless an imaginative experience..." It was no hearing of the bell; it was *waḥy* which the Prophet heard like the sounding of the bell. The expression *mithla* (مثل) used along with *ṣalṣalah*

1. *Bukhârî*, no. 2.
2. Watt, *op. cit*, 55-56.
3. *Bukhârî*, no. 3215.

makes this quite clear. Nor was it an "imaginative experience", as Watt terms it. For the Prophet unequivocally mentions that it was "the hardest on me", thereby saying that it was very much a physical experience on his part. The same thing is emphasized by 'A'ishah (r.a.) when she says that she saw him, at the coming down of *waḥy* upon him, "on an extremely cold day, with his forehead running down with perspiration". It is strange that Watt, after having quoted this report verbatim (the words in quotation are his) suggests that it was "an imaginative experience"!

A second grave mistake on Watt's part lies in his statement: "... there is no mention of hearing anyone speaking or of hearing words spoken, not even imaginatively". Now, the material clause here in the report is: *wa qad wa'aytu 'anhu mâ qâla* which means "and I committed to memory / got by heart from him *what he said*". The fact of something having been said to him is thus clearly stated in the report. Watt ignores this significant statement in the report and asserts that "there is no mention" of "anyone speaking" on the occasion. He seems to think that the verb *wa'aytu* does not bear any sense of hearing and that it means to understand something within one's own self. This is quite wrong. The primary meaning of the verb *wa'â / ya'î* (وعى / يعي) is to hold, to contain, to retain in memory, to remember, to listen carefully and remember, etc.[1] More particularly, when it is used along with the expression *mâ qâla* (ما قال) it invariably means listening carefully and getting by heart what is said. Watt himself translates the clause as: "... and I have understood from it what He (or "he") said". Even in English, when it is said, "I have understood what he said", it does not exclude hearing of that which is said. In the above noted translation of his, however, Watt commits another mistake. He translates the word *'anhu* in the text as "from it". He obviously means by "it" what he conceives to be the sound of the bell; but this is not the case. The pronoun *hu* here refers to the angel, not to *ṣalṣalat al-jaras*: for in that case it would have been framed in the feminine form *hâ*, *ṣalṣalah* being feminine in form.

In fact the verb *wa'a/ya'î* in its various forms is the appropriate term used in *ḥadîth* literature to mean listening carefully and getting by heart what is said or stated by another person. The following are three typical instances illustrating this special meaning of the verb.

1. See *Lisân al-'Arab*, under *wa'y*, or any standard Arabic English dictionary, for instance, Hans Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic* (ed. J. Milton Cowan), under *wa'y*.

(a) The famous *ḥadîth* of 'Abû Hurayrah in which he said:

(... ما كان أحد أعلم بحديث رسول الله ﷺ مني من عبد الله بن عمرو فإنه كان يكتب بيده ويعي بقلبه وكنت أعيه بقلبي ولا أكتب بيدي ...)

"... None knows more of the *ḥadîth* of the Messenger of Allah, may peace and blessings of Allah be on him, than me except 'Abd Allah ibn 'Amr; for he used to write (it) down with his hand and also to get it by heart, while I used to get it by heart and did not write it with my hand..."[1]

(b) The *ḥadîth* of Khâlid al-'Udwânî:

(قال فسمعته يقرأ ﴿والسماء والطارق﴾ حتى ختمها قال فوعيتها في الجاهلية وأنا مشرك ثم قرأتها في الإسلام ...)

"...He said: Thus I heard him read *Wa al-Samâ' wa al-Ṭariq* (*sûrah* 86) till he finished it. He said: So I committed it to memory (*wa'aytuhâ*) in the state of *jâhiliyyah* while I had been a polytheist, then I recited it in Islam (i.e. after his embracing of Islam)."[2]

(c) The *ḥadilth* of 'Abd Allah ibn Mas'ûd:

(.. وقد وعيت عن كل واحد منهم الحديث الذى حدثنى ...)

"...And I had committed to memory from everyone of them the *ḥadîth* which he narrated to me..."[3]

There are many other reports wherein the verb is used specifically to mean listening carefully and retaining in memory what is said.[4] The same sense for the verb is clearly borne out by the Qur'ânic passage 69:12:

﴿لنجعلها لكم تذكرة وتعيها أذن واعية﴾ (٦٩:١٢)

"That We might make it a reminder for you and that the retaining ears might retain it (in remembrance)."

Thus Watt is wrong in understanding the meaning of the verb *wa'aytu* occurring in the report and in supposing that there is no mention in it of anything being said or heard and, further, that the Prophet at the end of the experience "simply found the words of the revelation in his heart." A no less fundamental defect in Watt's treatment of the report is that while it speaks of a single manner of the coming of *waḥy*, he bifurcates the process into two different types of experiences — the one, the so-called "imaginative expe-

1. *Musnad*, II, 403.

2. *Musnad*, IV, 335.

3. *Ibid.*, VI, 194.

4. See for instance, *Bukhârî*, no. 2047; *Tirmidhî*, no. 2658; *Dârimî*, Intro. p. 24; *Musnad*, II, 161, 475; IV, 254, 366.

rience", and the other, the so-called "intellectual locution". The text of the report in no way warrants such bifurcation of the single process. The manner of the coming of *wahy* spoken of here was neither an imaginative experience nor an intellectual locution. It was very much a physical experience on the Prophet's part and a vocal communication of a text which he heard and retained in memory.

Speaking about the second manner where Allah's speaks "from behind a veil" Watt says that this had reference primarily to some early experiences of the Prophet, "such as that in passage B of the material from az-Zuhrî", where "the Truth came to him and said, O Muḥammad, thou art the Messenger of God."[1] Watt further says that since the words "from behind the veil" suggest that there is no vision of the speaker, it implies that in such a case only the "words are heard, and that therefore this is an imaginative locution (or even an exterior locution)."[2]

In the above mentioned sentences Watt in effect admits his inconsistency (though he does not seem to realize it). He has so long been utilizing his passage B, particularly the expression "the Truth came to him and said...", as evidence of a vision of God, or at least an ocular vision of a symbol of God (or probably, as he assumes, a mental or imaginative vision of God). But now he cites the passage to illustrate the manner of Allah's speaking "from behind a veil" i.e., without being seen, and hence it was the case of only hearing the words without a vision —"an imaginative" or "exterior locution". It is indeed difficult to keep pace with Watt's inconsistencies! The only relieving feature is that he quicly adds that this manner "was presumably not common" and conceivably "intended for a description of Moses"[3]

Speaking about the third manner where God sends a messenger to deliver *wahy* Watt says that Muslim scholars think that the messenger was Jibrîl and it was he who brought *wahy* from the beginning; but Western scholars note that he is not mentioned *by name* in the Qur'ân until the Medinan period, that "there is much" both in the Qur'ân and tradition "that is contrary to the common Muslim view", and that the Muslim view "reads back later conceptions into the earlier period."[4] Watt further says that during the Madinan period

1. Watt, *op. cit.*, p. 56.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*, p. 56.

revelations by means of Jibrîl might have been common; but even in "such cases the revelation was presumably an imaginative locution", for the mention of Jibrîl coming in the "form of a man" suggests "an imaginative vision."[1]

Here Watt reiterates the same old plea that Jibrîl is not mentioned *by name* in the Qur'ân until the Madinan period and states on that basis that the Muslim view reads back later conceptions into the earlier period. This specific remark is an exact echo of what Bell says in this connection.[2] This remark and the statement that the Muslim view is contrary to much of what is contained in the Qur'ân and tradition are obviously based on the above mentioned plea and also on the other assumptions, namely, (a) that Al-Zuhrî's report speaks of "the truth" and not of Jibrîl bringing the revelation; (b) that the passage of *sûrat al-Najm* speaks of a vision of God and (c) that the term *waḥy* as used in the Qur'ân does not mean verbal communication of a text. All these assumptions have already been examined and shown to be wrong and untenable.[3] Hence the above mentioned remarks are also untenable.

Watt admits that revelations by means of Jibrîl might have been common throughout the Madinan period. *Why* then the same angel could not have been the conveyer of *waḥy* in the earlier period is not explained by Watt. His predecessor Bell of course suggests, as seen earlier,[4] that Jibrîl was introduced at Madina because it was only then that the Prophet came to know about him. The unreasonableness of this explanation has been pointed out earlier. That Watt does not advance any explanation in this connection probably indicates that he is aware of the weakness of Bell's explanation.

While recognizing that during the Madinan period revelations by means of Jibrîl could be common Watt says that in such cases these were "presumably imaginative" locutions because the traditions mention Jibrîl appearing in "the form of a man" which suggests that his appearance was "an imaginative vision". It may only be pointed out here that the coming of Jibrîl to the Prophet was not always an affair strictly private to him. Sometimes, as in the famous *ḥadîth* relating to *îmân* and *iḥsân*, the appearance of Jibrîl in the

1. *Ibid.*, p.57.
2. See *M.W.*, 1934, p.149.
3. *Supra*, pp. 609-627, 650-662.
4. *Supra*, pp. 442-444.

form of a man was very much a physical affair noticed by the Prophet's companions. Therefore the matter cannot be disposed of simply by saying that the angel's appearance was "presumably an imaginative vision" peculiar to the Prophet alone.

It would have been observed that whatever the manner of *waḥy* might be, Watt has attempted to show it to be either an imaginative or an intellectual locution. Thus the first manner of *waḥy*, according to Watt, was an "interior", "probably an intellectual" locution; the second manner, "an imaginative locution (or even an exterior locution)", and the third manner "presumably an imaginative" locution. The whole manoeuvre is directed towards showing that the Qur'ânic *waḥy* was a matter of the Prophet's mind, "intellect" and "consciousness", not verbal communication of any text made physically by any agency. By such manoeuvres Watt seems to aim also at bringing Islamic revelation in line with the Christian concept of "inspiration". Hence he asks his readers not to confuse "visions" and "locutions" with hallucination, to take seriously the "science" and "discipline" of "mystical theology" as developed by writers like A. Poulain and suggests that "it would undoubtedly be profitable to make a full comparison of the phenomenal aspects of Muḥammad's experiences with those of Christian saints and mystics."[1]

It should at once be pointed out that the analogy so far made by Watt between the "manners" of Qur'ânic *waḥy* and the mystical concepts of A. Poulain is neither convincing nor tenable. Nor are the manners of Qur'ânic revelation comparable with the experiences of the Christian saints and mystics who being "inspired" are said to have put down in their own words what they understood from the "inspiration".

Finally Watt refers to "the physical accompaniments of the reception of revelation" and to the instances of the Prophet's putting on a *dithâr* and says that the symptoms described could not be identical with epilepsy which allegation Watt rejects as "completely unsound based on mere ignorance and prejudice." Having done so, however, he harps on the allegation of the Prophet's having known something of the method of "inducing" revelations "by 'listening' or self-hyptonism or whatever we like to call it."[2] It is further alleged that the Prophet knew the "way of emending the Qur'ân;...of discovering the correct form of what had been revealed in incomplete or incor-

1. Watt, *op. cit.*, p. 57.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 57-58.

rect form."[1] Earlier, while speaking about what Watt calls the Prophet's attempt to "induce emending revelations", he observes that "it is part of orthodox Muslim theory that some revelations were abrogated by others."[2]

Now, it is to be noted that Watt here combines two different theories of his predecessors into one theme. He reiterates, on the one hand, Margoliouth's theory of inducing revelations by a sort of self-hypnotism etc., and, on the other, relates it with Bell's theory of "revision" of the Qur'ân by the Prophet. It may be recalled that while Margoliouth bases his theory of "inducing" on what is called "the physical accompaniments of the reception of revelation", Bell bases his theory on the language-style of the Qur'ân and the theory of abrogation. So far as the latter's views are concerned, they have been examined previously and found to be untenable.[3] It may once again be pointed out that the concept of "abrogation" relates not to the replacement of any *'âyah* of the Qur'ân by another *'âyah* or *'âyahs*, but to the amendement of certain *ḥukms* or instructions and rules of guidance. Watt combines the two themes by a subtle shift from the "physical accompaniments" to what is called "the technic" which the Prophet is alleged to have developed of "listening" and "discovering the missing verses", of "emending the Qur'ân", etc. The innuendo that apparently links the so-called "inducing" of revelations on the one hand and the "technic" of emending or revising the Qur'ân on the other is that in both cases it was a skill and technic acquired or artificially produced by the Prophet — a sort of "self-hypnotism or whatever we like to call it." It is difficult to see how this innuendo is any the better than the allegation of epilepsy which Watt so grandiloquently rejects. The main reason for his rejection of the theory of epilepsy appears to be not an intention to present the Prophet's image in a better form but a realiztion of the fact, as Watt points out, that "that disease leads to physical and mental degeneration, whereas Muḥammad was in the fullest possession of his faculties to the very end."[4]

In making the alternative and no less serious reflection on the Prophet's character and integrity Watt does not cite a single instance of when the Prophet "induced" the "physical accompaniments" or applied the "technic" in

1. *Ibid.*, p. 58.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 53.
3. *Supra*, Ch. I, sec. IV.
4. Watt, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

"emending the Qur'ân" or in "discovering the missing verses". Watt simply disposes of this basic requirement in substantiating the allegation by saying that "the details must remain conjectural, but it would seem certain that Muḥammad had some way of emending the Qur'ân..."[1] Thus does Watt present his conclusion avowedly on the basis of what is "conjectural" and what would "seem to be certain". Yet he starts the section by reminding others that in the matter of the Prophet's sincerity and integrity "conclusive proof is a much stricter requirement than a show of plausibility". Clearly Watt has sacrificed his professed objective at the altar not even of plausibility but of conjecture savouring of prejudice.

Watt somewhat mollifies his conclusion by adding that the fact that "Muḥammad sometimes induced his experiences of revelation" is not relevant "to the theologian's judgement of validity".[2] The statement is unnecessary because Watt professes not to pass any theological opinion. But whether the question is relevant or not for the theologian's judgement, it is very much relevant to the historian's quest for the truth. By merely reproducing his predecessors' views that the Prophet sometimes "induced", that is, artificially produced the revelation or emendation of the Qur'ân, by self-hypnotism or the like, the historian Watt has obviously slipped away from his stand as the historian and has simply failed to act up to the standard he had set for himself at the beginning.

It appears that Watt here labours under a difficulty. Having concentrated his attention almost exclusively on the objective of casting the "experiences of revelation" into Poulain's mould of "imaginative" and "intellectual" locutions he at last finds himself confronted with the facts of physical hardships and symptoms that undoubtedly sometimes accompanied the coming of *waḥy* to the Prophet. Watt finds it impossible to fit them in the theory of intellectual or imaginative locutions. Hence he simply dumps them into the dustbin of the Mrgoliouth-Bell theories of inducing of revelations and emendation of the Qur'ân. He seems to have persuaded himself that since the theory of disease (epilepsy) does not work, that of deliberate act, namely, artificially producing and inducing the symptoms and revelations would. If Watt had considered the facts really objectively he would not have missed the point that "the physical accompaniments of the reception of revelation"

1. *Ibid.*, p. 58.
2. *Ibid.*

strongly militate against the theory of intellectual or imaginative locution. After all, the Christian saints and mystics whom Poulain has chiefly in view do not appear to have had the physical accompaniments of revelation experienced by the Prophet. Hence his case is very much different from that of the saints and mystics. Whatever the nature of their "interior prayer" and "inspiration", their situation cannot simply be transferred to the Prophet.

The instances of the physical accompaniments of the reception of revelation mentioned in the sources are indeed very few. If, therefore, *waḥy* was for most of the time what is called intellectual or imaginative locutions as Watt says, it is not understandable why the Prophet should at all have had recourse to the method of "inducing", i.e. artificially producing the symptoms and revelations. The question of inducing the symptoms arises only if they are a constant feature or concomitant of the coming of *waḥy*. But that is not at all the case. Hence neither were the symptoms ever induced by the Prophet nor was the coming of *waḥy* without those symptoms merely intellectual or imaginative locutions.

The expression "imaginative locution" or "intellectual locution" is in fact a contradiction in terms. "Locution" means "style of speech", "way of using words", "phrase or idiom". Poulain says that while "imaginative locution" is received by the imaginative sense without the assistance of ear, "intellectual locution" is "a simple communication of thought without words, and consequently without any definite language". Now, thoughts and ideas, however abstract, could be conceived or communicated only by means of words and language, these being their only vehicle. Words are thus inseparable from thoughts and ideas. Any person, whatever his language, thinks and dreams in his own language, whether he expresses them vocally or not, or whether he uses the same set of words or the same language while expressing them. Any person who has no language can have no idea and no thought. Poulain's definition of "intellectual locution" as "simple communication of thought" without words and without language thus appears to be a high-sounding nonsense.

Whatever the sense Poulain and Watt assume for the expressions, the act of conceiving something, whether intellectually or imaginatively, presupposes the existence of its essence in the sub-conscious mind of the person concerned. He must have obtained its impression, idea or image somehow or other at some stage or other of his life. In the case of the Prophet, despite all

the theories of his having allegedly learnt a good deal from Waraqah ibn Nawfal and other people in the markets of Makka and elsewhere, it cannot be proved that he had previously obtained the ideas and information about all that is mentioned or dealt with in the Qur'ân. If, on the other hand, this pre-requisite of the existence of subconscious knowledge or idea is dispensed with, it becomes necessary to import the role of the "supernatural" in the matter. Watt of course once says that the Prophet might have received communications "supernaturally".[1] In applying the theory of intellectual and imaginative locutions to the case of Qur'ânic *waḥy*, however, Watt does not at all mention the "supernatural", nor does he identify its relationship with the process of intellectual and imaginative locutions. In fact, if the role of the "supernatural" is faithfully and consistently acknowledged, there would be no need to utilize the "equipment" supplied by Poulain.

It should be clear from the above discussion that Watt has attempted to substantiate essentially the views of Bell regarding the Qur'ânic *waḥy* by adopting, on the one hand, the latter's interpretation of the term *waḥy* in the Qur'ân and of the Qur'ânic passages 53:4-14 and 42:50-52 and, on the other, by twisting 'Â'ishah's (r.a.) narration of the coming of *waḥy* to the Prophet and by having recourse to the "equipment" of "intellectual locution" supplied by A Poulain. That Bell is grossly mistaken in his interpretation of the term *waḥy* has already been shown[2] by an analysis of some of the Qur'ânic passages wherein this specific term occurs in connection with the revelation of the Qur'ân. There are, however, a large number of Qur'ânic passages that speak very clearly about the nature of Qur'ânic revelation without employing the term *waḥy*. Since neither Bell nor Watt has taken into consideration these passages, it would be worthwhile to round off the present discussion by noticing some of them.

III. FURTHER QUR'ÂNIC EVIDENCE ON THE NATURE OF THE QUR'ÂNIC *WAḤY*

(1) There are more than 125 passages in the Qur'ân which speak of its having been "sent don" (*tanzîl*, تنزيل / ,*'anzalnâ* انزلنا , *munazzal* منزّل, etc.), thereby stressing the fact that what was communicated was a specific text; for an abstract thought or idea or inspiration is not "sent down". In some of the passages, for instance 6:93, the expressions *'unzila* and *'anzala* are very

1. *Ibid.*, p. 47.
2. *Supra*, Chap. XVIII, sec. IV.

much in apposition to the expressions *'ûḥiya* and *'awḥâ*.[1] Of the 125 or so times, it is mentioned at least 34 times that Allah "sent it down" (*nazzala* نزّل and *'anzala* أنزل).[2] Again, Allah Himself speaks in the first person at least another 34 times saying "We have sent it down" (*'anzaltu* أنزلت , *'anzalnâ* أنزلنا, *nazzalnâ* نزّلنا).[3] At least 44 times it is said in the passive voice that "it has been sent down" (*'unzila* أُنزل ,*'unzilat* أُنزلت , *'nuzzila* نُزّل , *nuzzilat* نُزّلت , *yunazzalu* يُنزّل , *tunazzalu* تُنزّل).[4] And at least 14 times the Qur'ân is described as "something sent down" (*tanzîl* تنزيل , *munazzal* مُنزّل).[5] Again, to remove all doubts about it, Allah Himself bears witness on this point in unequivocal terms as follows:

﴿لـكن الله يشهد بمآ أنزل إليك أنزله بعلمه والملـٰئكة يشهدون وكفىٰ بالله شهيدا﴾ (٤:١٦٦)

"But Allah bears witness that what He has sent down to you He has sent down with His knowledge (i.e. being fully aware of it); and the angels bear witness (to that), but enough is Allah for a witness." (4:166)

(2) It is similarly emphasized at least a dozen times that what has been "sent down" is in a specific language, in Arabic. For instance:

﴿إنا أنزلنـٰـه قرءاناً عربيا ...﴾ (١٢:٢)

"Surely We have sent it down, an Arabic Qur'ân....." (12:2)

﴿وإنه لتنزيل رب العـٰـلمين.... بلسان عربيٍّ مبين﴾ (٢٦:١٩٢..١٩٥)

"And certainly it is a sent-down of the Lord of all the worlds...in the clear Arabic tongue." (26:192.......195).[6]

(3) That which has been sent down is collectively as well as severally des-

1. The passage runs thus:

﴿ومن أظلم ممن افترىٰ على الله كذباً أو قال أوحيَ إليَّ ولم يُوحَ إليه شيء ومن قال سأُنزل مثل ما أَنزلَ الله .... ﴾ (٦:٩٣)

2. The passages are: Q. 2:29; 2:170; 2:231; 3:4; 3:7; 4:61; 4:113; 4:136; 4:166; 5:4; 5:45; 5:47; 5:48; 5:49 (2 times); 5:104; 6:91; 6:93; 6:114; 9:97; 16:2; 16:24; 16:30; 16:110; 18:1; 25:6; 31:21; 36:15; 42:15; 42:17; 47:9; 57:9; 65:5 and 65:9.

3. The passages are: Q. 2:41; 2:99; 4:105; 4:174; 5:48; 6:92; 6:115; 10:94; 12:2; 13:37; 14:1; 16:44; 17:105; 17:106; 20:2; 20:113; 21:10; 21:50; 22:16; 24:1; 24:34; 24:46; 29:47; 29:51; 38:29; 39:2; 39:41; 44:3; 58:5; 59:21; 64:8; 76:23; 97:1.

4. These passages are: أُنزل = Q. 2:4; 2:91; 2:136; 2:185; 2:285; 3:72; 3:84; 3:199; 4:60; 4:162; 5:67; 5:70; 5:71; 5:84; 5:86; 6:156; 6:157; 7:2; 7:3; 7:157; 11:14; 13:1; 13:19; 13:36; 29:46; 34:6; 38:8; 39:55; 46:30. أنزلت = 9:86; 9:124; 9:127; 28:87; 47:20. نُزّل = 15:6; 16:44; 25:32; 43:31; 47:2. نُزّلت = 47:20. يُنزّل 2:105; 5:104. تُنزّل = 9:64.

5. These passages are: Q. 6:114; 17:106; 20:4; 26:192; 32:2; 36:5; 39:1; 40:2; 41:42; 45:2; 46:2; 56:80; 69:43; 76:23.

6. See also Q. 13:37; 16:103; 19:97; 20:113; 39:28; 41:3; 42:7; 43:3; 44:58 and 46:12.

cribed as the Book (*kitâb*) in more than a score of passages.[1] Some of these passages are as follows:

﴿ تنزيل الكتـــب لا ريب فيه من رب العـــلمين ﴾ (٣٢ : ٢)

"The sending down of the Book, there is no doubt in it, is from the Lord of all the worlds. (32:2)

﴿ تنزيل الكتـــب من الله العزيز الحكيم * إنا أنزلنا إليك الكتـــب بالحق ... ﴾ (٣٩ : ١-٢)

"The sending down of the Book is from Allah, the All-Powerful, the All-Wise. Verily it is We Who have sent down the Book to you in truth...'(39:1-2)

﴿ الله نزّل أحسن الحديث كتـــبا .. ﴾ (٣٩ : ٢٣)

"Allah sent down the best speech/text as a Book."(39:23).

(4) It is to be noted that in the above quoted passage, what has been sent down is also described as "speech" or "text" (*ḥadîth* حديث). The same description occurs in other passages as well. For instance:

﴿ فذرني ومن يكذب بهذا الحديث .... ﴾ (٦٨ : ٤٤)

" So leave Me and the one (i.e; leave me to deal with the one) who regards as false this text...."(68:44)

﴿ فليأتوا بحديث مثله إن كانوا صـــدقين .... ﴾ (٥٢ : ٣٤)

" So Let them the come up with a text like it, if they are truthful." (52:34)[2]

(5) Equally significant is that, what is sent down is described as Allah's "Decree" (*ḥukm*), His "Command/Order (*'amr* أمر). For instance:

﴿ وكذلك أنزلنـــه حكما عربيا ... ﴾ (١٣ : ٣٧)

"And thus We have sent it down as a decree/rescript in Arabic."(13:37)

﴿ ذلك أمر الله أنزله إليكم ... ﴾ (٦٥ : ٥)

"That is the Command of Allah; He has sent it down to you..." (65:5)

(6) Equally significant is that, what is "sent down" is specifically called a *sûrah* (chapter). For instance:

﴿ سورة أنزلنـــها وفرضنها وأنزلنا فيها ءايـــت بينـــت ... ﴾ (٢٤ : ١)

"A *sûrah*, We have sent it down and have made it incumbent; and We have sent down in it clear signs..." (24:1)

1. See for instance Q. 2:176; 2:231; 3:3; 3:7; 4:105; 4:113; 4:136; 4:140; 5:48; 6:7; 6:92; 6:114; 6:155; 7:2; 7:196; 14:1; 15:6; 15:9; 16:44; 16:64; 16:89; 17:106; 18:1; 20:2; 21:10; 29:47; 29:51; 38:29; 39:2; 39:41; 42:15; 42:17; 45:2; 46:2; 46:30.

2. See also Q. 7:185; 18:6; 45:6; 53:59; 56:81 and 77:50.

﴿ يحذر المنـٰفقون أن تنزل عليهم سورة... ﴾ (٩ : ٦٤)

"The hypocrites fear lest a *sûrah* should be sent down about them". (9:64)[1]

(7) Again, that which is "sent down" is term *dhikr* (citation, account, narrative, reminder, reminiscence). For instance

﴿ إنا نحن نزلنا الذكر وإنا له لحـٰفظون ﴾ (١٥ : ٩)

"Verily it is We Who have sent down the *dhikr*; and verily it is We Who shall certainly preserve it". (15:9)

﴿ وقالو يـٰأيها الذى نزل عليه الذكر إنك لمجنون ﴾ (١٥ : ٦)

"And they say: O the one on whom the *dhikr* has been sent down, you are indeed mad". (15:6)

﴿ ... وأنزلنآ إليك الذكر لتبين للناس ما نزل إليهم... ﴾ (١٦ : ٤٤)

"... And We have sent down to you the *dhikr*, in order that you explain to men what has been sent down to them". (16:44).[2]

(8) Besides the expression "sending down" there are other terms as well used in the Qur'ân to denote Qur'ânic *waḥy*. An important term in this series is *'ilqâ'*, meaning delivering, throwing, flinging, dictating, which is used in a very early passage, namely, ﴿ إنا سنلقى عليك قولا ثقيلا ﴾ (٧٣ : ٥) : "Verily We will soon throw on (deliver to) you a weighty saying (word)" (73:5). Another very early passage wherein the term occurs is: ﴿ أءُلقى الذكر عليه من بيننا... ﴾ (٥٤ : ٢٥):"Has the *dhikr* been thrown on him, of all of us?" (54:25)

(9) Of similar import is the expression *waṣṣalnâ* (وصّلنا), meaning "We have caused to reach", used in connection with the delivery of Qur'ânic *waḥy*. Thus: ﴿ ولقد وصّلنا لهم القول لعلهم يتذكرون ﴾ (٢٨ : ٥١) "And We have caused the word (saying) to reach them so that they may receive admonition". (28:51)

(10) Similarly there are a number of passages wherein the expressions *qaṣaṣnâ* (We narrated / related) and *naquṣṣu* (We narrate / relate) bear the sense of *'awḥaynâ* (We communicated) and *nûḥî* (We communicate). For instance: ﴿ تلك القرىٰ نقص عليك من أنبآئها... ﴾ (٧ : ١٠١): "Those are the towns (settlements) of which the accounts We relate to you... " (7:101). ﴿ وكلا نقص عليك من أنباء الرسل... ﴾ (١١ : ١٢٠): "And all that We narrate to you of the accounts of the messengers..." (11:120). ﴿ نحن نقص عليك نبأهم بالحق... ﴾ (١٨ : ١٣)"We narrate to you

1. See also Q. 9:86; 9:127 and 47:20.

2. See also Q. 7:63; 7:69; 12:104; 21:2; 21:50; 26:5; 36:11; 36:69; 38:1; 38:8; 38:49; 38:49; 38:87; 41:41; 43:5; 43:44; 54:25; 68:51; 68:52 and 81:27.

their accounts in truth..." (18:13).[1] It is noteworthy that in all these passages what is narrated / related is termed "accounts / reports" (*naba'*, *'anbâ'*).

(11) Of greater significance are the group of expressions that say "We have it read" (*nuqri'u* نقرئ), "We have read" (*qara'nâ* قرأنا) and "We recite (*natlû* نتلو) in lieu of *nûḥî* and *'awḥaynâ*. For instance: ﴿سنقرئك فلا تنسى﴾ (٨٧:٦) "We shall have (it) read unto you; so you shall not forget". (87:6). ﴿فإذا قرأنـه فاتبع قرءانه﴾ (٧٥:١٨): "So when We have it read/ recited, then repeat its reading / recitation". (75:18). ﴿تلك ءايـت الله نتلوها عليك بالحق...﴾ (٤٥:٦); "Those are the signs of Allah; We recite that unto you in truth..." (45:6).[2]

It should be noted that in (8) and (9) above, what is delivered to the Prophet is called *qawl* (قول), that is, "saying" or "word" of Allah.[3] This term has the same signification as those of *ḥadîth* (statement, saying) and *kalimât* (words) mentioned earlier. Besides, the expression *qul* (قل) occurs at least 332 times in the Qur'ân, thus emphasizing that the Messenger of Allah was given the dictation by Allah.

To sum up, there are at least half a dozen different terms used in the Qur'ân in lieu of *waḥy* to denote the delivery of Qur'ânic *waḥy* to the Prophet. These terms, to recapitulate, are:

(a) *'Anjalnâ* (أنزلنا): "We sent down", in various forms of the root word, and repeated statements that the Qur'ân is something "sent down" (*tanzîl*, *munazzal*).

(b) *Waṣṣalnâ* (وصّلنا): "We caused to reach".

(c) *Nuqri'u / Qara'nâ* (نقرئ / قرأنا): "We have (it) read".

(d) *Natlû* (نتلو): "We recite".

(e) *Nulqî* (نلقي): "We throw / deliver".

(f) *Naquṣṣu* (نقص): "We relate / narrate".

All these terms clearly show that what was delivered to the Prophet was in the form of specific texts. But the evidence is not confined to the import of these expressions alone. The passages containing them as also those containing the term *waḥy* jointly and severally state unequivocally that what was thus delivered to the Prophet was:

1. See also Q. 4:164; 6:57; 11:100; 12:3; 16:118; 18:13; 20:99; and 40:78.
2. See also Q. 2:252; 3:28; 3:108.
3. See also Q. 18:39; 23:68; 69:40; 81:19 and 86:13.

(a) A Qur'ân (Reading / Recitation);

(b) A *Kitâb* (Book / Scripture);

(c) A *sûrah* (chapter);

(d) *Ḥadîth* (statement / saying) of Allah;

(e) *Qawl* (saying / word) of Allah;

(f) *Kalimât* (words) of Allah;

(g) *Ḥukm* (a decree / order) of Allah;

(h) *'Amr* (command) of Allah;

(i) *'Anbâ'* (accounts / narratives) given by Allah.

There are of course other terms and expressions in the Qur'ân that refer to Qur'ânic *waḥy*. It should be clear from the above, however, that the divergence between the Qur'ânic evidence on the nature of Qur'ânic *waḥy* and the orientalists' assumptions about it is irreconcilable. Thus, for instance: (a) The Qur'ân says (and authentic reports repeat the same facts) that Allah sent an angel-messenger (Jibrîl) with the Qur'ânic *waḥy* to the Prophet. The orientalists, on the other hand, would have us believe that the coming of the angel to the Prophet was "probably" an "intellectual" or even an "imaginary" vision on his part! (b) The Qur'ân says that in the initial stage of the reciept of Qur'ânic *waḥy* the Prophet used hastily to move his toungue to repeat it; but he was asked not to do so and was assured that Allah would enanble him to remember and recite the text. As against this, the orientalists would say that the Prophet's experience was "probably" an "exterior" or even an "intellectual" locution! (c) The Qur'ân says that it was Allah's "words" (*kalimât*), His "saying" (*qawl / ḥadîth*), a Book (*Kitâb*), that were delivered to the Prophet and that also in the "clear Arabic tongue". The orientalists would insist that the Prophet had only an "intellectual locution" "without words" and even "without any specific language!" Clearly, such assumptions do not have any support in the Qur'ân, whatever the "equipments" with which these might have been framed.

Besides the passages containing the term *waḥy* and its equivalents, there are a number of other facts mentioned in the Qur'ân that bear clearly on the nature of Qur'ânic *waḥy*. Thus (1) the Qur'ân itself, and therefore the Prophet also, strongly and repeatedly deny the allegation made by the unbelievers that it was his own composition. It is stated that none could be a worse sinner than the one who himself composed a text and then falsely attri-

buted it to Allah and that if the Prophet did so he could not have averted severe punishment for that offence[1]. (2) Closely connected with this repeated denial of the allegation is the challenge which the Qur'ân (and therefore the Prophet) throws to the detractors of all times to come up with a text like that of the Qur'ân. It must be noted that this challenge is not an item of the so-called subsequently developed Islamic orthodoxy but very much in the Qur'ân itself.[2] This challenge still remains open; but the very fact that it was made at the time means that the Qur'ân and the Prophet denied the allegation of his having composed it. (3) The Qur'ân also shows that the unbelievers of the time indirectly admitted that it was not really the Prophet's own composition; for when they realized that he was incapable of composing it himself they came up with the alternative allegation that others had composed it for him. That allegation too was quickly denied and rebutted.[3] (4) Another indirect admission on their part was that though they asked the Prophet to produce some specified miracles they could not conceal their surprise at the extraordinary nature of the Qur'ânic text. Thus whenever a *sûrah* or Qur'ânic passage was given out to them they came out with the remark that it was "a clear sorcery", "a magic" ﴿سحر مبين﴾.[4] This shows that they did not at all consider the Qur'ânic texts to be like the ordinary speech of the Prophet, nor did they think them to be in any way comparable with the literary compositions they were habituated to hearing.

(5) It is also noteworhty that the unbelievers repeatedly asked the Messenger of Allah to give them a different Qur'ân or to change it. In reply he told them very clearly that it was not within his power to change even a word of what was *waḥy*-ied to him and that he was himself to follow it to the word. With reference to this demand of the unbelievers the Qur'ân states:

﴿وإذا تتلىٰ عليهم ءاياتنا بينـٰت قال الذين لا يرجون لقاءنا ائت بقرءانٍ غيرِ هـٰذا أو بدّلهُ قل ما يكون لِي أن أبدّله من تلقآيِ نفسي إن أتبع إلا ما يُوحىٰ إليَّ...﴾ (١٠:١٥)

"And when Our clear signs (*'âyahs*) are recited unto them, those who do not entertain any hope of meeting Us say: 'Bring us a Qur'ân (Reading / Recitation) other than this, or change it.' Say: 'It is not for me that I can change it from myself (on my

1. Q. 3:94; 6:21; 6:93; 6:144; 7:37; 10:17; 10:37-38; 10:69; 11:13; 11:18; 11:35; 16:116; 18:15; 21:5; 25:4; 29:68; 32:3; 42:24; 46:8; 61:7 and 69:44-47.

2. Q. 2:23; 11:13; 52:34.

3. Q. 16:103. See also *supra*, Ch. XI, sec. IV.

4. See for instance Q. 5:110; 6:7; 10:76; 11:7; 21:3; 27:13; 34:43; 37:15; 43:30; 46:7; 52:2; 6:16 and 74:24.

own accord). I follow naught but what is *waḥy*-ied to me.'" (10:15)

The last sentence in the above passage is also very significant. Not only that the Prophet did not compose the Qur'ân nor was free to change a word of it, he himself was subject to its dictates and injunctions.[1]

(6) Again, the pre-prophetic life of the Messenger of Allah is cited in bringing home the fact that the Qur'ân was none of his composition. Thus the *'âyah* that immediately follows the one quoted above states:

﴿قل لو شاء الله ما تلوته عليكم ولا أدرٰكم به فقد لبثت فيكم عُمُراً من قبله أفلا تعقلون ﴾ (١٠ :١٦)

"Say: 'If Allah had so willed, I should not have recited it unto you; nor would He have made it known to you. A whole life-time before this have I spent amongst you. Do you not then understand?" (10:16)

This passage actually calls attention to three important matters. First, it refers to his previous character and conduct in general, specially his acknowledged truthfulness and integrity, thus stressing the fact that he was not the sort of a person who would, all of a sudden, appear before his community with a false claim about himslef and also about the teachings he was giving out to them. Second, it draws attention to the fact that for at least forty years of his life prior to his call he had never shown any desire to be a leader of his people nor had expressed any intention to carry out a socio-religious reform of his society. Third and most important of all, he had never exhibited any literary skill or ambition and had never before the coming of *waḥy* to him composed a single sentence of literary Arabic. This fact is decisive; for it is common knowledge that a person who has no literary experience or training cannot all of a sudden produce first class, or rather incomparable literary compositions even if he is supplied with the ideas and facts from another source.

(7) The Qur'ân also contains a number of statements about scientific facts the meaning and significance of which are becoming clear with the progress of scientific knowledge in recent times.[2] This shows that the Prophet or any one of his alleged assistants could not have composed the texts.

(8) Last but not least, the fact of the *fatrah* or pause in the coming of *waḥy*, as mentioned earlier, demonstrates clearly that it did not in any way emanate from the Prophet's personality nor was it a product of his consciousness. Had it been so, there would have been no *fatrah* and no cause for the

1. See also Q. 6:106; 7:203 and 46:9.
2. *Supra*, Ch. XII, sec. II.

Prophet's restlessness and sadness on that account.

Thus the Qur'ân strongly and in various ways contradicts that the Qur'ânic *waḥy* was in the nature of "suggestion" or "intellectual locution" without any words or any definite language. In fact the orientalist's approach to the subject seems to suffer from a basic contradiction. He appears to profess himself a believer in God, angels and their coming with His words and messages to the Old and New Testament Prophets and other personages; but in dealing with Muḥammad (ﷺ) and the Qur'ân he slips away from the position of a believer and takes a secularist stance in that he in effect argues that since the phenomena of an angel's coming with God's word to a Prophet or God's communicating His words to him in other ways do not appear to be in accord with ordinary human understanding and experience, the Qur'ân's and Muḥammad's (ﷺ) statements to such effects should be interpreted with the help of "mystic", psychological and "philosophical" equipments. Even then, the modern orientalist appears to be aware that what he adduces as the evidences of the Qur'ân and traditions about the nature of Qur'ânic *waḥy* is mostly forced, unnatural and "tendential shaping" of the texts and facts and that there still remains much in both the sources that contradicts his assumptions. Hence, to make up the deficiency, he has had recourse to the advertisemnet of the Prophet's sincerity in order to deny the truth of what he says. The Prophet was sincere, it is said, and he conscientiously believed in what he said, but he was nonetheless mistaken in what he believed and said. He said the Qur'ânic *waḥy* was a verbal communication of the texts in Arabic. The orientalist says: "No, the Prophet only sincerely believed and thought it to be so; but actually he received some ideas and thoughts —it was only a matter of his own mind and intellect, an aspect of his special consciousness, an imaginative or intellectual locution. He even at times 'induced' the receipt of such suggestions and ideas". The statements of the Qur'ân and of Muḥammad (ﷺ) on the one hand, and those of the modern orientalist, on the other, are thus poles apart. It is difficult to see how these views are in any way different from what the Quraysh unbelievers used to say before their acceptance of Islam that the Qur'ânic *waḥy* was the Prophet's "medleys of dreams" (*'aḍghâth 'aḥlâm*),[1] or what William Muir said that it was the Prophet's "trance utterances" or what Bell said that it was the natural conclusion which comes into one's mind after prolonged deliberation and con-

1. Q. 21:5.

sideration over a certain matter. In their views regarding the Qur'ân and the Qur'ânic *waḥy*, thus, the modern orientalists stand in effect on the same plane where the Makkan unbelievers stood some fourteen hundred years ago and where William Muir and his contemporaries stood a century and a half ago.

إنّ وزارة الشؤون الإسلامية والأوقاف والدعوة والإرشاد

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And Allah is the Bestower of guidance.

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بالتعاون مع
الجامعة الإسلامية في المدينة المنورة

SÎRAT AL-NABÎ ﷺ AND THE ORIENTALISTS

WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE WRITINGS OF
WILLIAM MUIR, D. S. MARGOLIOUTH AND
W. MONTGOMERY WATT

Vol. I B
From the early phase of the Prophet's
Mission to his migration to Madinah

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بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

الحمد لله رب العالمين والصلاة والسلام على رسوله سيدنا ونبينا محمد وآله أجمعين وبعد .

PREFACE

The scope and purpose of the work have been explained in the preface to its Vol. I A which covers the subject from the background to the beginning of the Prophet's mission. The present volume is in continuation of that volume. As such the pagination as well as the numbering of the sections and chapters have been kept continuous in the present volume. It contains sections V to VII embracing chapters XXI to XXXIX and carries on the narrative since the early phase of the Prophet's mission till his migration to Madina. As in Vol. I A, in this volume too, the main events and developments relating to each section have been described first in one or more chapters, followed by an analysis and examination of the views and suggestions of the orientalists on them. Likewise attempts have been made to summarise the orientalists' arguments and reasons as faithfully as possible and to meet them on their own grounds.

* * *

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constant encouragement and help in all possible ways.

In preparing this work I had to work in the Central Library of the Islamic University, Madina, the Library of its Higher Studies Department, the Library of the Centre for the Service of *Sunnah* and *Sîrah*, the Library of the Prophet's Mosque, the Library of the Oriental Section of the Faculty of Da'wah of the Imam Muḥammad Islamic University, situated at Madina Munawwara, the Library of the School of Oriental and African Studies, London and the British Library (British Museum). Everywhere I received the best of attention and the most willing cooperation. My thanks are due to the staff of all these libraries and institutions.

The Prophet's Mosque, M. M. Ali

19 Dhû al-Qa'dah, 1413 H.

(10 May 1993)

CONTENTS

SECTION VII
THE LATE MAKKAN PHASE AND MIGRATION TO MADINA

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Al-Azraqî	'Abû al-Walîd Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allah ibn Aḥmad al-Azraqî, *Akhbâr Makka wa mâ jâ'a fîhâ min al-'Âthâr*, ed. Rushdî al-Ṣâliḥ Mulḥis, Beirut, 1399 / 1979.
Al-Fâsî	'Abû Ṭayyib Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad, al-Taqî, al-Fâsî, *Al-'Iqd al-Thamîn Fî Târîkh al-Balad al-'Amîn*, 8 Vols., Cairo, 1379-1388 H.
B.S.O.A.S.	*Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, London.
Bukhârî	'Abu 'Abd Allâh Muḥammad ibn Ismâ'îl al-Bukhârî, *Ṣaḥîḥ al-Bukhârî* (The number refers to the number of *ḥadîth* in *Fatḥ al-Bârî*).
Ibn Hishâm	'Abû Muḥammad 'Abd al-Malik ibn Hishâm, *al-Sîrah al-Nabawiyyah* ed. Muḥammad al-Saqqâ and others, 2 Vols., second print, Cairo, 1375 / 1955.
Ibn Sa'd	Muḥammad ibn Sa'd ibn Manî', 'Abû 'Abd Allâh, *Al-Ṭabaqât al-Kubrâ*, 8 Vols., Beirut, 1405 / 1985.
J.R.A.S.	*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, London.
M.W.	*The Moslem World*, Hartford Seminary Foundation, Connecticut, U.S.A.
Muslim	'Abû al-Ḥasan Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjâj, al-Qushayrî, al-Naysabûrî, *Ṣaḥîḥ Muslim*, (The number refers to the number of *ḥadîth* in the edition by Fu'âd A. Bâqî, 5 Vols., Istanbul, n.d.)
Musnad	'Abû 'Abd Allâh Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal ibn Muḥammad, *Musnad al-Imâm Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal wa bihâmishihi Muntakhab Kanz al-'Ummâl*, 6 Vols, old print, n.d.
Suhaylî	'Abû al-Qâsim 'Abd al-Raḥmân ibn 'Abd Allâh ibn 'Abî al-Ḥasan al-Khath'amî, *Al-Rawḍ al-'Unuf Fî Tafsîr al-Sîrah al-Nabawiyyah li ibn Hishâm*, ed. Ṭa-Hâ 'Abd al-Ra'ûf Sa'îd, 4 vols, Beirut, 1398.

T.G.U.O.S	*Transactions of the Glasgow University Oriental Society*, Glasgow.
Ṭayâlisî	Sulaymân ibn Dâud ibn al-Jârûd 'Abî Dâud, *Musnad 'Abî Dâud al-Ṭayâlisî*, Beirut, n.d.
Tirmidhî	'Abû 'Îsâ Muḥammad ibn 'Isâ ibn Sawrah, *Al-Jâmi' al-Ṣaḥîḥ wa huwa Sunan al-Tirmidhî*, ed. Aḥmad Muḥammad Shâkir, 4 vols., Cairo, second print, 1398 / 1987.
Watt, *M. at M.*	W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1988.
Watt, *M.'s M.*	W. Montgomery Watt, *Muḥammad's Mecca*, Edinburgh, 1988.

SECTION V
THE EARLY PHASE OF THE MISSION

CHAPTER XXI

THE EARLY PHASE OF THE MISSION

I. THE INITIAL PERIOD

The *fatrah* or pause in the coming of *waḥy*, as mentioned earlier, was an affair in the initial stage of the Prophet's commission and it lasted for a few weeks at the most.[1] It was ended, according to most of the reports, by the revelation of the first few *'âyahs* of *sûrat al-Muddaththir* which marked the beginning of *risâlah* or commission to preach.[2] The second *'âyah* of this *sûrah* was a direct command to the Prophet to "get up and warn", i.e., warn his people against the consequences of their wrong beliefs and practices. The third *'âyah* specifies the main theme of his preaching — وربك فكبر— "And your Lord, proclaim His Supremacy". It meant that he was to declare that "Allah is the Greatest" (الله أكبر), to denounce *shirk* or polytheism in all its varieties and to proclaim the unity and supremacy of Allah over all other imaginary deities. The directive to "warn" thus meant warning the people against the consequences of their polytheism.

Understandably, the messenger of Allah at first approached those persons in whom he could repose his confidence and from whom he could hope for favourable response or at least sympathetic hearing. Ibn Isḥâq informs us that for the first three years the Messenger of Allah carried on the work of preaching "secretly". At the end of that period Allah commanded him to preach openly what he had received from Him. This new directive was contained in passages 15:94 and 26:214 revealed at that time.[3] The two passages run as follows:

(a) 15:94 - ﴿فاصدع بما تؤمر وأعرض عن المشركين﴾ (١٥ : ٩٤)

"Therefore expound openly (or distinctly) what you are commanded; and pay no heed to (or turn away from) the polytheists".

1. See *supra*, p. 390. See also Muḥammad 'Abû Shahbah, *Al-Sîrat al-Nabawiyyah* etc., Vol. I, *op. cit.*, p.264 and Muḥammad 'Izzat Darwazah, *Sîrat al-Rasûl*, Vol. I, *op. cit.*, p.138.

2. Ibn Isḥâq's statement (Ibn Hishâm, I., p.241) that *sûrat al-Ḍuḥâ* (96) was revealed after the *fatrah* is not acceptable in view of the report in *Bukhârî* (no. 4950) about the occasion for revelation of that *sûrah*. None of the scholars of the Qur'ânic sciences (*'ulûm al-Qur'ân*), though they classify the *sûrah* as an early one, regards this to be the one that was revealed after the *fatrah*. See Al-Suyûṭî, *Al-Itqân* etc., p. 10.

3. Ibn Hishâm, I., p.262.

(b) 26:214 - ﴿وأنذر عشيرتك الأقربين﴾ (٢٦ : ٢١٤)

"And warn thy nearest kinsmen".

Following Ibn Isḥâq Al-Ṭabarî also states that for the first three years the work of preaching was carried on secretly.[1] Subsequent writers have only followed their suit and have taken the statement as it is.

This statement about what is called the period of secret preaching, however, has to be taken with caution; for the facts related by both Ibn Isḥâq and Al-Ṭabarî themselves on one hand, and those gleaned from the Qur'ân, on the other, do not quite warrant the assumption of a period of secret preaching as such. In fact Ibn Isḥâq does not base his statement on any specific authority or *sanad* but on the general assertion — *fi-mâ balaghanî* — (فيما بلغني), i.e., "as I have come to know". More important than this, he rightly reckons 'Abû Bakr as one of the three earliest converts, after Khadîjah (r.a.), and states: "When 'Abû Bakr, may Allah be pleased with him, embraced Islam, he made known his acceptance of Islam and called people towards Allah and His Messenger".[2] Ibn Isḥâq actually mentions the names of five persons belonging to different clans who embraced Islam at 'Abû Bakr's instance.[3] It is after having said all this that Ibn Isḥâq makes the above mentioned statement about the period of secret preaching. Neither from his account nor from the other sources do we get the impression that 'Abû Bakr's and the others' conversion to Islam took place after the initial period of three years. Hence what Ibn Isḥâq means by the initial period of secret preaching was obviously a period of private preaching — of personal contacts and approach to individuals in contradistinction to preaching to gatherings and assemblages of peoples at markets, fairs and such other public places.

Secondly, speaking about the same subject of the early converts to Islam Al-Ṭabarî gives two versions of a report by 'Afîf (al-Kindî, of Yaman) who says that once, before he had embraced Islam, he came to Minâ during the *ḥajj* days and there met his friend 'Abbâs ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, uncle of the Prophet. There 'Afif saw a good-looking young man, accompanied by a lady and a boy, performing *ṣalât* (prayer) turning towards the Ka'ba. 'Afîf enquired about them and their peculiar religion and was told by 'Abbâs that

1. Al-Ṭabarî, *Târîkh*, I,1169.
2. Ibn Hishâm, I,249. The text runs as follows:

(قال ابن إسحاق فلما أسلم أبو بكر ﷺ، أظهر إسلامه ودعا إلى الله ورسوله)

3. Ibid., pp.250-262. See also *infra*, pp.520-521.

the young man was his nephew, Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allah (ﷺ), the lady, Khadîjah (r.a.), his wife, and the boy, another nephew, 'Alî ibn 'Abî Ṭâlib (r.a.), adding that the first mentioned person claimed to have been chosen as Allah's Messenger and the other two believed in him and followed his new religion. Later on 'Afîf used to remark regretfully that had he then embraced Islam he could have been the fourth convert.[1] It is evident from this report that the fact of the Messenger of Allah's commission as such, and of his mission and activities, was no secret and unknown affair to his people and that he even used to perform prayer in the new manner sometimes within the sight of people, such as at Minâ during *ḥajj* days.

The same picture emerges from the accounts of the conversion of 'Abû Bakr and Ṭalḥah ibn 'Ubayd Allah ibn 'Uthmân al-Taymî, (r.a.). It is reported that 'Abû Bakr came to know about the Prophethood of Muḥammad (ﷺ) from a maid servant of Ḥakîm ibn Ḥizâm with whom he was sitting at the time and that immediately on getting this information he hurried to the Prophet and, after only ascertaining the truth of the information, embraced Islam without any hesitation or further questioning.[2] About Ṭalḥah it is reported that on his return from Bosra, where he had gone for trading and where he heard about the appearance of a Prophet at Makka, ascertained from the people of the town that "Muḥammad al-Amîn" (ﷺ) had been commissioned as a Prophet and that 'Abû Bakr had embraced Islam. Thereupon Ṭalḥah went to the latter and with him to the Prophet and became a Muslim.[3] It is further related that the conversion of 'Abû Bakr and Ṭalḥah, both of Banû Taym, so much angered Nawfal ibn Khuwaylid ibn Asad (of Banû Asad), who was known as the "Lion of Quraysh", that he tied them both together with one rope as punishment for their having gone over to the new faith and that their own clan, Banû Taym, did not dare come to their rescue. For this incident 'Abû Bakr and Ṭalḥah came to be known as "the two comrades" (*al-Qarînân*).[4] This fact shows that the affair of the Prophet and the conversion of such important members of the Makkan society as 'Abû Bakr and Ṭalḥah were the "talk of the town", so to say, and that the Makkan lea-

1. Al-Ṭabarî, *Târikh*, I,1160-1163. See also '*Usud al-Ghâbah*, no. 3696 and *Istî'âb*, III, 1241-1243 (no.2036).

2. Zurqânî, *Sharḥ Mawâhib etc.*, cited in Maudûdî, *op. cit.*, II, 145.

3. *Al-'Iṣâbah*, no.4266 (Vol. II, p.229).

4. Ibn Kathîr, *Al-Bidâyah etc.*, VII, p. 247; Ibn Hishâm, I, p. 282.

ders' concern for the new movement and their opposition to it manifested themselves right from the beginning.

The facts illustrated by the above mentioned reports are strongly corroborated by the Qur'ân. Thus the first few *'âyahs* of *sûrat al-Qalam* (68), about the early revelation of which there is no difference of opinion,[1] state:

﴿ ما أنت بنعمة ربك بمجنون * وإن لك لأجرا غير ممنون * وإنك لعلىٰ خلق عظيم * فستبصر ويبصرون * بأييكم المفتون * إن ربك هو أعلم بمن ضل عن سبيله وهو أعلم بالمهتدين ﴾

"You are not, by the grace of your Lord, mad (or possessed). Indeed, for you is an unfailing reward; and you certainly are on an exalted standard of character. Soon you will see, and they too will see, which of you has gone off his head. Verily it is your Lord Who knows best who has strayed from His path; and it is He Who knows best who are on the path of guidance". (68:2-7)

It is clear from this passage that the Prophet had already started calling the people to the truth and that the initial reaction of the unbelievers was the accusation that he had gone off his head and that he had strayed from the right track.[2] The passage reassures the Prophet about the sublimity of his character and about the correctness of his work and conduct.

The same facts are revealed also by *'âyahs* 9-10 of *sûrat al-'Alaq* (96) which, though revealed separately from its first few *'âyahs*, were not much later than they. These two *'âyahs* refer to a prominent Makkan unbeliever ('Abû Jahl) "who forbids a servant of Allah (i.e. the Prophet) when he prays". Incidentally, this fact of the Prophet's praying within the sight of others at a very early stage of his career is very much in tune with 'Afîf al-Kindî's report mentioned above. Even the Passage 15:94, which Ibn Isḥâq cites as containing a directive to preach openly presupposes that the Messenger of Allah's work and mission had already been known to the people and that it had elicited the unbelievers' ridicule; for the immediately succedding *'âyah* (15:95) assures him: "Verily We suffice you against those who ridicule you". ﴿إنّا كفينـك المستهزءين﴾. It may be observed that ridicule and accusation of going mad are the types of reaction that were naturally elicited in the first instance.

There are of course the well-known reports that the Prophet beseeched Allah to strengthen Islam by the conversion of either 'Abû Jahl or 'Umar ibn

1 In fact it is universally regarded as second in the order of revelation.

2. See *infra.*, pp. 620-621.

al-Khaṭṭâb,[1] that Ibn Mas'ûd stated that the Muslims were weak previously to 'Umar's conversion and became strengthened by his conversion[2] and that the latter himself, after his conversion, remarked that if they were in the right, why then should they hide their activities.[3] These reports are of course correct; but none of them really proves that there was a three-year period of "secret" preaching. On the contrary they presuppose the existence of opposition and oppression that necessitated a policy of precaution and lying low on the part of the Muslims.

Even the incident that reportedly led to the Prophet's taking Dâr al-Arqam at the foot of the Ṣafâ hill as the centre of his activities and as the venue of the Muslims' prayers and meetings, points to the same conclusion. It is said that the Muslims, for fear of being harassed by the unbelievers, used to perform their prayers in solitary valleys of Makka. Once while they were thus engaged in prayer a party of the unbelievers came upon them and began to abuse them which ultimately resulted in a scuffle in the course of which Sa'd ibn 'Abî Waqqâṣ injured an unbeliever.[4] This incident took place at least a couple of years after the beginning of the Prophet's call. At any rate, Dâr al-Arqam was not taken as the meeting-place of the Muslims from the very beginning and definitely not before the conversion of a number of persons outside the family circle of the Prophet, including the conversion of Al-Arqam ibn 'Abî Al-Arqam of Banû Makhzûm, 'Abû Jahl's own clan, who was the owner of the house.

If we take into consideration and collate all these facts the following picture emerges. The Messenger of Allah, on being commanded to "warn" his people and to perform prayer, immediately started doing so. His having been called to Prophethood and Messengership was no secret — it was known to the People of Makka from the very start. His prayers in the new manner were also noticed by the People. One of the earliest converts, 'Abû Bakr, not only made no secret of his conversion but also persuaded a number of well-to-do persons from different clans to embrace the new faith. As Islam thus began to make steady progress it alarmed the conservative Quraysh leaders

1. *Musnad*, II., p.95; *Tirmidhî*, no.3764; *Al-Mustadrak*, III, p.83; *Ibn Mâjah*, I, p.39 (no.105) and Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqât*, III, p.269.

2. *Bukhârî*, no.3864.

3. Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqât*, III, pp.269-270; Ibn al-Jawzî, *Manâqib 'Umar*, (Bâb II), p. 18.

4. Ibn Hishâm, I, p.263.

who started their opposition to it. Such opposition sometimes reached the extent of physical assaults, such as that inflicted on 'Abû Bakr and Ṭalḥah. This development put the Prophet and the Muslims on the side of caution and they began to perform their prayers unobserved in order to avoid being harassed or being involved in open clashes. Even then clashes took place. Ultimately, therefore, Dâr al-Arqam was fixed as the place for their prayers and meetings. At the end of some three years the passages 15:94 and 26:214 were revealed directing the Messenger of Allah to carry on the work of propagation disregarding and defying opposition and also to expand the method of preaching from personal contacts to addressing the public at fairs, market-places and similar gatherings. Thus Ibn Isḥâq's statement that 'Abû Bakr made his conversion known and called others to accept the new faith and the other statement that "open" preaching started with the revelation of the above mentioned passages at the end of three years of the Prophet's mission would both be correct.

II. THE EARLY CONVERTS

All the reports agree in stating that the first person to belive in the Prophet was his wife, Khadîjah (r.a.). Next come three persons, 'Alî ibn 'Abî Ṭâlib, Zayd ibn Ḥârithah and 'Abû Bakr. The reports differ regarding the relative order of their conversion,[1] but there is no doubt that they were the very earliest converts after Khadîjah and that no long periods intervened between their conversions. Since 'Alî and Zayd were both members of the Prophet's household, there could be no doubt that outside his private and family circle 'Abû Bakr was the first person to believe in him. Almost all the reports say that 'Alî was about 10 years old when he embraced Islam. It may also be assumed, as 'Abû al-'A'lâ Maudûdî points out, that the Prophet's daughters, Zaynab, Umm Kulthûm and Ruqayyah (r.a.), who were all given in marriage prior to the Prophet's call, must also have embraced Islam following their parents. As regards Fâṭimah (r.a.), she was born in the cradle of Islam, one year after the call.[2]

'Abû Bakr was the Prophet's friend since his boyhood and was a successful merchant with a considerable fortune. He was liked by all for his pleas-

1. See Ibn Hishâm, I, pp.245-246, 247, 249; Ibn Isḥâq, *Al-Siyar wa al-Maghâzî*, pp. 138-140; Al-Dhahabî, *Al-Sîrat etc.*, pp.127, 137-133 and *Siyar A'lâm al-Nubalâ'*,II, p.115; Al-Ṭabarî, *Târikh*, II, 309-310, 312-313, 317 (I./1159-1160,1163-1164,1168).

2. Maudûdî, *op. cit.*, II, 143-144 n.

ing personality and was an expert in the genealogy and family history of the Quraysh. Immediately on his conversion he undertook to disseminate the truth among his closest friends and acquaintances. Within a few days at least five persons belonging to four different clans embraced Islam at his instance.[1] They were:

'Uthmân ibn 'Affân ibn 'Abî al-'Âṣ of Banû 'Umayyah

Zubayr ibn al-'Awwâm ibn Khuwaylid of Banû Asad

'Abd al-Raḥmân ibn 'Awf of Banû Zuhrah

Sa'd ibn Abî Waqqâṣ (Mâlik ibn 'Uhayb) of Banû Zuhrah

Ṭalḥah ibn 'Ubayd Allah ibn 'Uthmân of Banû Taym

Abû Bakr brought all these persons to the Prophet and they embraced Islam at his hand and also performed prayers.[2] In their turn they worked as missionaries of the new faith to their close circles. Ibn Isḥâq gives a list of some fifty persons who became Muslims at this initial stage and before the beginning of what he calls "open" preaching.[3] The list appears to contain a couple of persons who could not have embraced Islam at that time, such as 'Â'ishah (r.a) who had not been born at that time; but otherwise it is not exhaustive and leaves out many others who embraced Islam during the very early phase. But even from Ibn Isḥâq's list it would be clear that there was no important Quraysh clan from which Islam had not gained converts durring this period. The clan-wise distribution of only those of Ibn Isḥâq's list about whose early conversion there is no doubt stands as follows:

Banû Hâshim:

1.'Alî ibn 'Abî Ṭâlib

2. Ja'far ibn 'Abî Ṭâlib

3. His wife 'Asmâ' bint 'Umays

Banû al-Muṭṭalib:

4. 'Ubaydah ibn al-Ḥârith ibn al-Muṭṭalib

Banû 'Abd Shams ibn 'Abd Manâf:

5. 'Abû Ḥudhayfah ibn 'Utbah ibn Rabî'ah

1. Ibn Hishâm, I, pp.250-252.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*, pp.252-262.

Banû 'Umayyah:

6. 'Uthmân ibn 'Affân
7. Khâlid ibn Sa'îd ibn al-'Âṣ ibn 'Umayyah
8. His wife 'Umaymah (or 'Umaynah) bint Khalaf (originally from Banû Khuzâ'ah)

Confederates of Banû 'Umayyah:

9. 'Abd Allah ibn Jaḥsh ibn Ri'âb
10. 'Abû Aḥmad ibn Jaḥsh ibn Ri'âb (brother of the above)

Banû Taym:

11. 'Abû Bakr
12. Ṭalḥah ibn 'Ubayd Allah
13. 'Asmâ' bint 'Abû Bakr

Confederates of Banû Taym:

14. Ṣuhayb ibn Sinân al-Rûmî

Banû Asad:

15. Al-Zubayr ibn al-'Awwâm

Banû Zuhrah:

16. 'Abd al-Raḥmân ibn 'Awf
17. Sa'd ibn 'Abî Waqqâṣ
18. 'Umayr ibn 'Abî Waqqâṣ
19. Al-Muṭṭalib ibn Azhar (cousin of no.16)
20. Ramlah bint 'Abî 'Awf (wife of the above and of Banû Sahm)

Confederates of Banû Zuhrah:

21. 'Abd Allah ibn Mas'ûd
22. Khabbâb ibn al-Aratt
23. Mas'ûd ibn Rabî' ibn al-Qârî

Banû 'Adiyy:

24. Sa'îd ibn Zayd ibn 'Amr ibn Nufayl
25. His wife Fâṭimah bint al-Khaṭṭâb (sister of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭâb)

26. 'Âmir ibn Rabî'ah ('Abû 'Abd Allâh)
27. Nu'aym ibn 'Abd Allah al-Naḥḥâm

Confederates of Banû 'Adiyy:

28. Khâlid ibn Bukayr ibn 'Abd Yalîl
29. 'Âmir " " " "
30. 'Aqîl " " " "
31. 'Ilyâs " " " "
32. Wâqid ibn 'Abd Allâh

Banû Jumaḥ:

33. 'Uthmân ibn Maẓ'ûn
34. Qudâmah ibn Maẓ'ûn
35. 'Abd Allah ibn Maẓ'ûn
36. Al-Sâ'ib ibn 'Uthmân ibn Maẓ'ûn
37. Ma'mâr ibn al-Ḥârith ibn Ma'mâr
38. Ḥâṭib " " " "
39. His wife Fâṭimah bint Mujallal
40. Ḥaṭṭâb ibn al-Ḥârith (brother of no.34)
41. His wife Fukayhah bint Yâsir

Banû Sahm:

42. Khunays ibn Ḥudhâfah

Banû Makhzûm:

43. 'Abû Salamah ('Abd Allâh ibn 'Abd al-Asad)
44. Al-Arqam ibn 'Abî al-Arqam
45. 'Ayyâsh ibn 'Abî Rabî'ah
46. His wife 'Asmâ' bint Salamah

Confederate of Banû Makhzûm:

47. 'Ammâr ibn Yâsir

Banû 'Âmir ibn Lu'ayy:

48. Salîṭ ibn 'Amr (ibn 'Abd Shams)
49. Ḥâṭib " " "

Banû Fihr ibn Mâlik:

50. 'Abû 'Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrâḥ

Thus there was practically no important family and clan from whom someone had not embraced the new faith. And though the number was by no means large, the very fact that so many clans were affected meant that the movement, though not publicly launched, was not at all a secret affair. The list, as already mentioned, is not exhaustive. We get from other sources the names of at least an equal number of other persons who embraced Islam at a very early period, definitely before the migration to Abyssinia which took place in the middle of the fifth year of the Prophet's mission, i.e., barely a year and a half after what is called the beginning of public propogation. A list of those early converts not mentioned in Ibn Isḥâq's work is appended to this chapter. It may be noted here that among those mentioned by Ibn Isḥâq and listed above there are at least three who were very closely related to the prominent leaders of opposition to the Prophet. One of these three is 'Abû Ḥudhayfah ibn 'Utbah ibn Rabî'ah (no. 5) who was a son of the opposition leader 'Utbah ibn Rabî'ah. The second is Khâlid ibn Sa'îd ibn al-'Âṣ ibn 'Umayyah (no. 7) whose father, Sa'îd ibn al-'Âṣ, otherwise known as 'Abû Uḥayḥah, was another prominent opponent of the Prophet. The third is 'Ayyâsh ibn 'Abî Rabî'ah, half-brother of the Prophet's fiercest opponent,'Abû Jahl.

III. PUBLIC PROPAGATION

After the intial period of some three years the passages 15:94 and 26:214 were revealed. They contained directives to the Messenger of Allah to undertake the work of propagation without heeding the ridcule and opposition of the unbelievers and to warn his relatives and kinsfolk against the consequences of unbelief and polytheism. He immediately took a number of steps to give effect to these directives. The exact chronological order of these steps is not known, but it is clear that they followed in quick succession and marked the beginning of a new phase in his work and mission.

(a) One of the steps taken by the Prophet was to make a formal call to the members of his own family and kinsfolk generally, asking them unequivocally to accept Islam and to abandon polytheism. The method adopted by him was that on one night he invited all the members of Banû Hâshim and Banû al-Muṭṭalib to a banquet. Some 40 to 45 persons including Ḥamzah and 'Abû Lahab attended it. After the dinner the Prophet was about to

address the gathering when 'Abû Lahab forestalled him and started the talk. Addressing the Prophet 'Abû Lahab reminded him that those present there were all his superiors — his uncles and cousins — and that whatever he intended to talk about he should not ask them to change their religion; for his clan, in fact the whole of Quraysh, had not the strength and capacity to face the combined opposition of all the Arab tribes on account of his work. 'Abû Lahab ended his remarks by saying that it behoved Banû Hâshim to restrain Muḥammad (ﷺ) before the others took steps to do so, adding that he had not been aware of anyone who had brought so much hardship and difficulty upon his own clan. The Prophet in fact did not find any chance to talk on that occasion.[1]

Undaunted, he had another banquet prepared on another night to which those people were invited. On that occasion he addressed them at the end of the dinner, explaining his mission and work and telling them clearly that he had indeed brought them a matter in which lay their good not only in this world but also in the hereafter. According to one version of the report, he addressed by name individually each member of his famliy and clan, reminding them that though he was their kinsman and relative he would be of no avail to them as against Allah's judgement and retribution. To emphasize his earnestness he further told them that if they so wished they could ask of him for whatever he had of worldly possessions, but he would have no power to save them from the consequences of their unbelief. At the end of the discussion 'Abû Ṭâlib stated that although he was not ready to forsake his paternal religion, he would nonetheless go all the way to support and protect the Prophet against the opposition and enmity of others. 'Abû Lahab, on the other hand, clearly expressed his disagreement with the position thus taken by 'Abû Ṭâlib and insisted once again that it was the duty of the clan to restrain the Prophet.[2]

The incidents of these two dinner meetings and what transpired in them are treated generally by the chroniclers as marking the beginning of open propagation; but if one looks at them a little carefully one would see that the Qur'ânic directive to the Prophet to warn his near relatives and the steps he took to carry out that directive have a deeper significance. In fact the steps described were not really needed just for the sake of making the Prophet's

1. Ibn Isḥâq, *Kitâb al-Siyar wa al-Maghâzî*, pp.145-146; Al-Ṭabarî, *Târikh*, (I / 1171-1172) Ibn al-Athîr, *Al-Kâmil etc.*, II, pp.40-41; Al-Dhahabî. *Al-Sîrat* etc., pp.144-145.

2. *Ibid.*

mission and work known to his family and clan. For, as we have noticed, they already knew about it and about the conversion of some memebrs of the clan, at least of 'Alî. The Qur'ânic directive and the above-mentioned incidents have rather a threefold significance. In the first place, it meant that the Prophet should embark upon the work of propagation disregarding not only the attitude and opposition of the other people of Makka but also without hesitating about the attitude of his own clan. He should make a formal and decisive call to them to accept the truth, regardless of the consequences of whether or not that step would alienate their sympathy and support for him.[1] Secondly, it was also necessary to remove any misgivings that might have lurked in their minds that their blood relationship with the Prophet and their worldly support for him would stand them in stead on the Day of Judgement and that they would be entitled to some sort of a preferential treatment on that occasion. They were to be told clearly that that would in no way be the case and that the Prophet, even if he wanted so, would be of no avail to them unless they had faith and had abandoned the wrong way. Thirdly, the Prophet's mission and work had reached such a stage as made it necessary for him to ascertain, and for his kinsfolk to determine, their exact policy and stand *vis-à-vis* the struggle in which he had been involved and which was already on. 'Abû Lahab's talk at the first banquet shows that he spoke not out of ignorance of what the Prophet's mission was but with a full awareness of its implications and of the task that devovled on the clan as a whole in consequence. In view of this fact it is clear that the banquet parties were really in the nature of "full sessions of the committee of the whole clan" to consider the issue of the Prophet's mission and the policy to be adopted by his clan regarding the opposition he faced on that account. 'Abû Ṭâlib's statememt was not simply an expression of his personal opinion but rather a statement of policy for the whole clan. It was a momentous decision with far-reaching consequences; and he scrupulously adhered to it till the end of his life. 'Abû Lahab's decision, on the other hand, was equally significant. He openly and decisively declared his policy of opposition to the Prophet's mission. In doing so, however, he contravened the accepted norm and age-old tradition of the Arabs in two ways. He publicly went against the almost unanimous decision of the clan, thereby causing a cleavage in the clan

1. One version of the report relating to the incident indicates that the Prophet was indeed suffering from some hesitation on the question. See Ibn Isḥâq, *Kitâb al-Siyar wa Maghâzî*, pp. 145-146.

solidarity. He also abandoned the universally followed Arab custom of supporting and protecting a clansman against the opposition and enmity of others irrespective of the issue involved. His conduct was all the more unusual because he was the Prophet's uncle[1] and, according to the Arab notion, in the position of his father.

If 'Abû Lahab thus declared his opposition to the Prophet before a council of his own clan, he soon did so before a public assmblage of the Makkan clans in general. This happened in the course of the second step which the Prophet apears to have taken about that time in pursuance of the programme of public propagation. It was an acknowledged practice at the time that if a person perceived an imminent danger to his people, such as a sudden appearance of a hostile force near the town or settlement, to go on top of a high place, usually a hill, and to raise cries of alarm to warn his people. Following this custom the Prophet went one morning to the top of the Ṣafâ hill near the Ka'ba and raised cries of alarm on top of his voice, calling by name the different clans and families. At this the people soon gathered at the spot. Those who could not come up themselves, sent someone to ascertain the matter for them. When the Makkans thus assembled near the hill, the Prophet began by asking them whether they would believe him if he told them that a fully armed and large enemy force were waiting on the other side of the hill for a sudden attack upon the town. The people shouted back affirmatively, adding that they had never experienced any lying on his part. Thereupon he addressed them saying that he was there to warn them against a still graver and inevitable danger which awaited them, that of Allah's retribution and punishment if they did not abandon the various forms of polytheism and instead worshipped Him alone. He also made it clear to them that he had been appointed by Allah His Messenger and warner to the people.

The reports regarding this incident do not mention the immediate reaction of the people of the other clans to this open call at Ṣafâ; but they specifically mention the reaction of 'Abû Lahab who, of all persons, came forward, openly announced his opposition to the Prophet, denounced him and cried destruction for him.[2] According to some reports, it was as a sequel to this attitude and action of Abû Lahab's that *Sûrat al-Masad* (111) was revealed.[3]

1. 'Abû Ṭâlib and 'Abû Lahab were born of different mothers.

2. See Ibn Sa'd, I, 200.

3. *Ibid.*, *Bukhârî*, no. 4971. also Al-Ṭabarî, *Tafsîr*, XXX, pp. 336-337 and Ibn Kathîr, *Tafsîr*, VIII, p. 534.

The incident is illustrative of how the phase of public propagation started. The sources mention three other incidents that by their very nature must be assigned to this initial period of public propagation. The first was that the Prophet one day went to the Ka'ba compound with some of his followers and started addressing the people there, calling them to give up the worship of idols and to worship Allah Alone. At this the Quraysh leaders and their supporters present there made an assault upon him. His step-son,[1] Al-Ḥârith ibn 'Abî Hâlah came to his defence but was so severely beaten that he died on the spot.[2] He was the first martyr in the cause of Islam.

The second incident was a similar attempt made by 'Abû Bakr. He expressed his intention to the Prophet to go to the Ka'ba and there proclaim the truth and recite the Qur'ân. The Prophet pointed out that the Muslims were still very few in number and that he feared that the unbelievers would assault 'Abû Bakr. The latter, in his spirit and enthusiasm, insisted on going there and was ultimately allowed to do so. As he started loudly reciting the Qur'ân the urbelievers at the Ka'ba compound surrounded him and attacked him. The leading part in the attack was taken by 'Utbah ibn Rabî'ah of Banû 'Abd Shams, who with his shoes so severly beat 'Abû Bakr that he was badly wounded, specially at the face, and fell unconscious. He was rescued by some of his clansmen of Banû Taym, but he remained in coma since the time of the occurrence, which was in the morning, till the evening. The incident was about to cause an inter-clan warfare to flare up; for the people of Banû Taym came in a body to the Ka'ba and vowed to take appropriate vengeance, particularly to kill 'Utbah, if anything happened to 'Abû Bakr. Fortunately he regained consciousness at night and gradually recovered.[3] An internecine warfare would have in fact broken out in consequence of either the killing of Al-Ḥârith ibn 'Abî Hâlah or the assault upon 'Abû Bakr but for the restraint exercised by the Prophet on both the occasions.

The third incident related to 'Abd Allah ibn Mas'ûd. Like 'Abû Bakr, he also went one day to the Ka'ba compound, proclaimed monotheism and loudly recited the Qur'ân. He was similarly assaulted and wounded. Once again the Prophet exercised restraint and prevented the incident from degen-

1. Khadîjah's (r.a.) son by her first husband.

2. *Al-'Iṣâbah*, I, p. 293, no. 1501.

3. Ibn al-'Athîr, *Al-Bidâyah etc.*, III, pp. 30-31; *Al-'Iṣâbah*, IV, p. 447, No. 1254 (*Kitâb al-Nisâ'*, Umm al-Khayr).

erating into an inter-clan conflict.[1]

In spite of such opposition the Messenger of Allah continued the work of preaching. Reports say that he used to go on preaching missions to the various tribes and clans of Makka and its vicinity and sometimes received adverse treatment from them. He also repaired to the different markets and fairs that were held at specified periods of the year, such as at 'Ukâẓ, Marr al-Ẓahrân and Majanna, and preached Islam to the people.

Being aware of the nature and composition of the Arabian society, especially of Makka, and of the position and influence of its leaders, he paid his attention to those leaders, naturally thinking that their conversion, or at least of some of them, would facilitate the acceptance of the truth by the generality of the people. We get from the Qur'ân glimpses of at least two occasions on which the Prophet was dealing with the leaders. Once he was conversing with some Makkan leaders in order to convince them of the truth of Islam. In the midst of that discussion a blind man, Ibn 'Umm Maktûm, came to him and asked him to explain Islam, thus interrupting him in his talk with the leaders. The Messenger of Allah, in his eagerness to win over the leaders, did not pay attention to Ibn 'Umm Maktûm's words. With reference to this incident *Sûrat 'Abasa* (no.80) was revealed, reprimanding the Messenger of Allah for his inattention to the poor man and reminding him (the Prophet) of the need to pay proper attention to the sincere enquirer rather than to those who were insincere and arrogant.[2] On another occasion the Makkan leaders expressed their willingness to sit with the Prophet for discussing Islam if only he agreed to dismiss from his presence the poor converts who always remained in his company. The Makkan leaders considered it beneath their dignity to sit along with those people who, according to their notion, were of no rank and position. Instantly Allah guided His Messenger to the right course of action which is contained in the passages 6:52 and 18:28. He was told not to accede to the demand of the unbelieving leaders and to remain happy with the sincere and devoted believers.[3]

IV. MAKKA AND BEYOND

The Makkan leaders were in fact not trying to understand Islam but were rather offering determined opposition to it. The nature of this opposition and its various aspects will be discussed in the following chapter. Here it

1. Ibn Hishâm, pp. 314-315.

2. See for instance Al-Ṭabarî, *Tafsîr* XXX, p. 33 and Ibn Kathîr, *Tafsîr*, VIII, pp. 342-343.

3. See *Muslim* (ed. F.A. Bâqî), no. 2413; Al-Qurṭubî, *Tafsîr*, VI, pp. 421-433 and X, pp. 390-391; Ibn Kathîr, *Tafsîr*, III, pp. 254-255 and V, p. 148.

may be noted that the enmity and oppressive conduct of the leaders sometimes defeated its purpose and caused additional conversion to Islam. Sometimes the truth made its own impression upon the heart of even an erstwhile and fierce opponent. Sometimes the Quraysh leader's malpropaganda against the Prophet and Islam indirectly helped the spread of his name and the ideas of Islam among the tribes beyond Makka and elsewhere in Arabia. These three features of the gradual progress of Islam are typified in the conversion of Ḥamzah and 'Umar of the Makkan upper class on the one hand, and of Ṭufayl ibn 'Amr al-Dawsî, 'Abû Dharr al-Ghifârî and some others from the tribes outside Makka, on the other.

(a) *Ḥamzah's conversion to Islam*: Ḥamzah ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib was the Prophet's uncle and was about the same age. He was very strong and brave and was on that account both respected and feared by his community. The immediate cause of his conversion to Islam was 'Abû Jahl's maltreatment of the Prophet. Once 'Abû Jahl met him on the street near Ṣafâ and severely abused him and maltreated him. He bore all that silently and patiently without uttering a word in reply. 'Abû Jahl then went to the Ka'ba compound and there sat with his companions. The incident was noticed, however, by a maid servant of 'Abd Allah ibn Jud'ân's who lived nearby. She reported it in detail to Ḥamzah who was then just returning from a hunting mission. Deeply annoyed and enraged at what he heard, Ḥamzah went straight to the Ka'ba and with his bow struck 'Abû Jahl, demanding to know why he had maltreated and abused Muḥammad (ﷺ) and declaring at the same time that he (Ḥamzah) too believed in the truth of what the Prophet preached. 'Abû Jahl's supporters from Banû Makhzûm stood up to counter-attack Ḥamzah but they were restrained by 'Abû Jahl who, conscious of his guilt and apprehensive of the consequences of Ḥamzah's ultimate conversion to Islam, attempted to pacify him by admitting that he ('Abû Jahl) had really been bad to the Prophet. The damage done to the unbelievers' cause by 'Abû Jahl's rashness was, however, irreparable. Ḥamzah's heart had really changed; he went to the Prophet and announced his conversion to Islam.[1]

The authorities differ about the date of Ḥamzah's conversion, some placing it in the second year of the Prophet's mission, while the others placing it

1. Ibn Hishâm, pp. 291-292; Ibn Isḥâq, *Kitâb al-Siyar wa al-Maghâzî*, pp. 171-172. Another version of the report says that Ḥamzah hesitated for sometime before ultimately declaring his acceptance of Islam to the Prophet.

in the sixth year.[1] Both these terminal dates appear to be incorrect. It is clear that his conversion took place most probably after the initial period of private preaching, that is, after the third year of the mission. On the other hand, it is also generally admitted that he embraced Islam before 'Umar whose conversion took place most probably in the fifth year of the mission, shortly after the first migration to Abyssinia. Ḥamzah's conversion was an important gain to Islam. Ibn Isḥâq specifically mentions that the unbelievers recognized the change brought about in the situation by Ḥamzah's conversion and they refrained from some of their oppressive activities.[2]

(b) *The conversion of 'Umar*: The next important accession to Islam was the conversion of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭâb of Banû 'Adiyy. He was an equally strong and spirited person and was, by his own admission, a fierce opponent of Islam and the Prophet, oppressing and persecuting new converts including some of his own relatives. He possessed, however, keen intellect, a quick understanding of affairs and, above all, a very good heart. Already his own sister, Fâṭimah, and her husband, Sa'îd ibn Zayd ibn 'Amr, and an elder half-brother, Zayd ibn al-Khaṭṭâb[3] had embraced Islam before him. He also seems to have been gradually inclined towards it.

There are a number of reports relating to 'Umar's conversion.[4] They seem to differ in matters of detail but in fact they supplement one another. All the reports, however, more or less unanimously emphasize the following facts:

(i) When 'Umar embraced Islam the Muslims were still in a very weak position, most of them attempting to hide their conversion and they and the Prophet still continued their main activities at *Dâr al-Arqam*. According to 'Umar's own statement, there was not a single Muslim at Makka who, on account of his conversion, was not maltreated and persecuted.

1. See Zurqânî, *Sharḥ Mawâhib etc.*, I., pp. 308-309; *Al-'Iṣâbah*, I, pp. 353-354, no. 1826.

2. Ibn Hishâm, p. 291.

3. *'Usd al-Ghâbah*, II, pp. 238-239. When Zayd ibn al-Khaṭṭâb was killed in the battle of Yamâmah 'Umar remarked that his brother had preceded him in respect of two good things — acceptance of Islam and attainment of martyrdom.

4. Most of these reports are reproduced in *'Usd al-Ghâbah,* Vol. III (new edition), no.3824. See also Al-Dhahabî, *Al-Sîrat al-Nabawiyyah*, Beirut, 1987, pp. 172-181; Ibn Hishâm, pp. 342-350; Ibn Sa'd, III, p. 269; *Musnad*, I, pp. 17-18.

(ii) His conversion was brought about neither by the personal approach of anyone, nor by his having listened to any public preaching, but by his having either accidentally or intentionally listened to and perused some passages of the Qur'ân.

(iii) Like 'Abû Bakr he also made no secret of his conversion. He declared it publicly and instantly and was in consequence denounced and heckled by the unbelievers.

The reports relating to 'Umar's conversion may be classified into three categories according to their principal subject matter — (a) those that speak about the Prophet's wish and prayer to Allah for strengthening Islam by the conversion of either 'Abû Jahl or 'Umar and also about the position of the Muslims; (b) those that deal mainly with the circumstances of 'Umar's conversion and (c) those that speak about the immediate consequences of his conversion.

As regards the first category, some reference has already been made to it.[1] Of the second category, the most important are two statements by 'Umar himself that have come down to us through different chains of narrators, with slight defferences in the wordings and details. One of these statements says that one day he went out with the intention of assaulting the Prophet but found out that he had already gone to the Ka'ba and started praying there. 'Umar stood silently behind him and listened to his recitation of part of *sûrat al-Ḥâqqah* (69) in the course of his prayer and was so moved by it that, in 'Umar's words, Islam took possession of his heart.[2] A slightly different version of this report makes the incident take place at night and adds that when the Prophet, after finishing his prayer, was returning home, 'Umar followed him and on his realizing that someone was following him and enquiring who it was 'Umar disclosed his identity and declared his faith.[3]

The second of 'Umar's statements gives a rather detailed account. It says that one day he went out taking his sword with him and determined to kill the Prophet.[4] On the way he met Nu'aym ibn 'Abd Allah (al-Naḥḥâm), a

1. *Supra*, pp.518-519.

2. *Musnad* I, pp.17,18.

3. Ibn Hishâm, pp. 347-348; Al-Dhahabi, *Al-Sîrat al-Nabawiyyah, op. cit.*, p.173; Ibn al-Jawzi, *Manâqib 'Umar*, p.15.

4. Ibn Isḥâq says that the Quraysh leaders had engaged 'Umar to kill the Prophet (*Kitâb Siyar wa al-Maghâzî*,181). See also *Usd al-Ghâbah, op. cit.*

person of 'Umar's own clan who had embraced Islam but had kept it a secret to avoid persecution. He asked 'Umar about his destination, and as he disclosed his purpose and also spoke ill of the Prophet, Nu'aym diverted him ('Umar) by saying that he should first set his own house in order. Surprised at this remark 'Umar demanded of Nu'aym to explain what he meant. He then divulged that 'Umar's own sister (Fâṭimah) and brother-in-law (Sa'îd ibn Zayd ibn 'Amr) had become Muslims. Thereupon 'Umar changed his course and went to the latters' house and actually found them in the state of reading from a written object part of the Qur'ân. In his rage he at first assaulted Sa'îd and when Fâṭimah came to his defence she also was struck. When 'Umar saw the wound and blood on his sister, however, he repented, calmed down and entreated her to show him the piece they were reading from. She at first objected but ultimately allowed him to see the passage. As he went through it he was so moved that he exclaimed words signifying the change in him. Encouraged at this Khabbâb ibn al-Aratt, who had hid himself in the house at 'Umar's approach and who had actually been helping the Sa'îd family with the reading of the Qur'ân, came out and congratulated 'Umar saying that the Prophet had the other day prayed to Allah for his conversion. 'Umar says that at that time the Prophet, whenever a person of no means embraced Islam, assigned a couple of such persons to a well-to-do Muslim for their shelter and maintenance, thus indicating that Khabbâb was so assigned to Sa'îd. However, being informed by them that the Prophet was then at the *Dâr al-Arqam* near Ṣafâ 'Umar went there and declared his acceptance of Islam at the hands of the Prophet. The Muslims who were present there were so elated with joy that they shouted *Allahu Akbar* so loudly that it was heard from the streets of Makka. 'Umar adds that hitherto they had been taking care to hide their activities.[1]

The sequel to his conversion has also been described by 'Umar himself. He says that he wanted to make his acceptance of Islam known to all and to face what the other converts had been facing of opposition and persecution. Hence he first went to the house of an important Makkan leader (according to one version, Abû Jahl) and knocked at his door. When he came out 'Umar informed him of his ('Umar's) conversion. That leader first expressed his surprise but when 'Umar repeated the fact he asked him not to do so and shut the door against him. He then went to another Quraysh leader's house,

1. Ibn Hishâm, pp.345-346; Ibn Sa'd, III, pp.267-269; '*Usd al-Ghâbah*, III, pp.644-647.

did the same thing and was similarly treated. Ultimately he went to the Ka'ba where there was a gathering of Quraysh people and declared before them his conversion to Islam. At this the assemblage burst out and attacked him. He also fought back. After a good deal of fracas Al-'Âṣ ibn Wâ'il came there and declared his protection for 'Umar. At this the people stopped their fighting. 'Umar did not, however, like to be protected by Al-'Aṣ and gave up his protection in spite of his remonstrances.[1] Two other statements by 'Umar's son confirm that the Makkan unbelievers actually heckled 'Umar on his conversion and that Al-'Âṣ ibn Wâ'il had offered him protection.[2]

According to Ibn Isḥâq the conversion of 'Umar took place shortly after the first migration to Abyssinia[3]. This event took place in the fifth year of the mission. On the other hand Al-Wâqidî, and following him Ibn Sa'd and some others, place 'Umar's conversion in the sixth year of the mission. All the reports agree in saying, however, that his conversion greatly strengthened the position of the Muslims. Previously they had not been able to pray openly at the Ka'ba; but after his conversion the situation changed and they started doing so.[4] In a way 'Umar's conversion marks the climax of Islam's success at Makka prior to the Prophet's migration to Madina. No other important Quraysh leader appears to have come within the fold of Islam before that event. By the time of his conversion, however, Islam had already stepped outside the bounds of Makka and had started gaining converts from various other Arabian tribes.

(c) *Conversion of Ṭufayl ibn 'Amr al-Dawsî*: One of the early instances of conversion from outside Makka was that of Ṭufayl ibn 'Amr al-Dawsî. The account, as given by himself, illustrates, on the one hand, how the Makkan leaders attempted to prevent visitors and foreign traders from coming in contact with the Prophet and how, on the other, such attempts rebounded on them and indirectly paved the way for the spread of Islam into the interior of Arabia. Ṭufayl was a leader of his own tribe, al-Daws, and was a poet. He says that once he came to Makka on some business. As soon as he arrived there a number of Quraysh people met him and warned him against

1. *Ibid*. See also Ibn Isḥâq, *Kitâb al-Siyar wa al-Maghâzî*, pp.184-185.

2. *Bukhârî*, nos. 3864,3865; Al-Bayhaqî, *Dalâ'il*, II, 9; Ibn al-Jawzî, *op. cit.*

3. Ibn Hishâm, pp. 342, 343-344.

4. See for instance Ibn Sa'd, III, p. 270; Ibn Hishâm, p. 242; Ibn Isḥâq, *Kitâb al-Siyar wa al-Maghâzî*, p.185.

Muḥammad (ﷺ) saying that he was a problemetical and enigmatic person who had been causing dissension in the society and whose words were like sorcery, alienating sons from parents, brothers from brothers and hunsbands from wives. They told Ṭufayl never to approach him nor to listen to what he said. Ṭufayl was so convinced by their talk that he made up his mind to avoid the Prophet. On the following day when Ṭufayl came to the Ka'ba, however, he saw the Prophet praying there and happened to hear some of what he was reciting in the prayer. The words sounded so sweet and impressive to Ṭufayl that he started arguing within himself that he was a poet and an intelligent young man capable of distinguishing between right and wrong. Why should he not then meet the person and listen to what he had to say? If it was good he might well accept it, if not, he would reject it and leave him. Thus arguing within himself Ṭufayl followed the Prophet when he returned home after his prayer, met him there and told him all that his kinsmen had spoken about him and also about his own impression of what he had just heard of the Prophet's recitation in prayer. Ṭufayl then urged him to explain his message to him. Thereupon the Prophet presented Islam to Ṭufayl and also recited to him a passage from the Qur'ân. "By God", says Ṭufayl, "I had never before heard so beautiful words, nor so reasonable a statement; and I instantly embraced Islam". The Prophet commissioned him, at his own request, to preach Islam among his people. On return home Ṭufayl converted his own family to Islam and continued to propagate it among his people, visiting the Prophet a second time before his migration to Madina. Subsequently he, along with 70 or 80 families of Muslims from his own tribe, met the Prophet at Madina after the battle of the Ditch.[1]

The internal evidence of the account suggests that Ṭufayl's conversion took place shortly after the beginning of public propagation of Islam. For, as will be seen in the following chapter, it was then that the Quraysh leaders decided to make a uniform statement about the Prophet to the visitors to Makka, saying that he was a sorcerer, instead of making different statements about him as they had hitherto been doing.

(d) *Ḍimâd al-Azdî's conversion*: Almost similar circumstances attended the conversion of Ḍimâd ibn Tha'labah of Azd Shanwa. He was an old acquaintance of the Prophet's and was himself a sort of a quack practising charms and blowings for curing various ailments. He came on a visit to

1. *'Usd al-Ghâbah*, III, pp.54-55.

Makka and was told by the people that Muḥammad (ﷺ) had gone mad. He told them that he could possibly cure him if given a chance to see him. In fact he met the Prophet and offered to cure him of his "madness". Thereupon the Prophet began to address him as follows[1]:

"All praise belongs to Allah. We praise Him and seek His assistance. Whomsoever He guides, none can mislead him; and whomsoever He allows to go astray, none can guide him to the right path. And I bear witness that there is none worthy to be worshipped except Allah Alone. There is no partner with him. And I bear witness that Muḥammad (ﷺ) is His servant and Messenger".

As soon as the Prophet finished uttering these words Ḍimâd stopped him and asked him to repeat them, which he did thrice at his request. Ḍimâd says that he was quite conversant with the types of compositions a soothsayer, a sorcerer and a poet were each wont to utter; but the Prophet's words were quite unlike any of those. His words bore meanings like the depth of an ocean. Therefore, says Ḍimâd, he accepted Islam then and there. The Prophet asked him to return to his own people and preach Islam to them, which he did.[2]

(e) *Conversion of 'Amr ibn 'Abasah and 'Abû Dharr al-Ghifârî*: While Ṭufayl and Ḍimâd were attracted to the Prophet rather by the mal-propaganda of the Quraysh leaders, 'Amr ibn 'Abasah al-Sulamî and 'Abû Dhar al-Ghifârî (Jundub ibn Junâdah) came to him by somehow hearing about him. 'Amr ibn 'Abasah is counted among the *ḥanîfs* who had given up the worship of idols and had started worshipping Allah Alone. He says that one day while he was thus speaking out his views he was told by one of his listeners that there had appeared at Makka a person who propagated similar views. Therefore 'Amr travelled to Makka and there came to know that the person he sought was working behind the scene and could not be seen except at night when he would come to the Ka'ba to cicumambulate it. Accordingly 'Amr waited there at night and, when the Prophet came there, met him and asked him about himeself and his mission. The Prophet said that he had been commissioned as Allah's Messenger, that it is Allah Alone Who should be worshipped and that He has no partner with Him. The Prophet also informed 'Amr about some other teachings of Islam. He then

1. The Arabic text, which has become an oft-repeated formula in Islamic discourses, runs as follows: (الحمد لله نحمده ونستعينه، من يهده الله فلا مضل له، ومن يضلل فلا هادي له، وأشهد أن لا إلـه إلا الله وحده لا شريك له، وأشهد أن محمدا عبده ورسوله....)

2. *Ibid.*, pp.41-42.

asked the Prophet who else had accepted his teachings. He replied that there were with him a slave and a free-man. 'Amr embraced Islam at the Prophet's hands and subsequently used to claim that he was the fourth person in the order of conversion. The claim does not appear to be quite correct, but there is no doubt that his conversion took place at a very early stage of the Prophet's mission. Ibn al-Athîr specifically says that 'Amr embraced Islam early, at the very beginning of Islam (أسلم قديما أول الإسلام). After his conversion 'Amr sought the Prophet's permission to stay with him, but was told to go back instead to his own people and to preach Islam among them. He did so and continued to preach Islam to his people for a long time till he heard about the Prophet's migration to Madina. Subsequently he met him there.[1]

Like 'Amr ibn 'Abasah, 'Abû Dharr also himself states that on coming to know that there had appeared a person at Makka who claimed to be Allah's Messenger, he sent his brother there to ascertain the facts. The latter came to Makka, met the Prophet and then returned home and reported his very favourable impressions about the Messenger of Allah. 'Abû Dharr was not, however, quite satisfied with the information. Therefore he himself came to Makka. He did not know the Prophet, but did not also dare ask anyone about him for fear of being harassed or persecuted by the unbelievers. Hence he kept on waiting at the Ka'ba. One evening 'Alî, while passing by him, noticed him as a stranger and invited him to stay that night at his ('Alî's) house. 'Abû Dharr did so but did not tell anything about himself to 'Alî. On the following day the latter similarly noticed 'Abû Dharr still waiting at the Ka'ba. Thinking that the man had not yet been able to find a place to stay at, 'Alî again took him to his house. On the way he asked 'Abû Dharr about the purpose of his visit to Makka. He at first hesitated to tell, but after making 'Alî promise that he would keep it a secret 'Abû Dharr told him that he ('Abû Dharr) was in search of the man who claimed himself to be Allah's Messenger. 'Alî told him that he was on the right course and with the right person, for he ('Alî) also was going to the Prophet. Thus did 'Abû Dharr, with 'Alî's help, meet the Prophet and after listening to him embraced Islam. The Prophet asked him to keep the fact of his conversion a secret at Makka, but he, being inspired and excited by the truth he had found, insisted on declaring it. In fact he came to the Ka'ba in the morning, announced his faith and loudly declared that there is no god except Allah and that Muḥammad

1. *Ibid.*, IV, pp.120-121.

(ﷺ) was his Messenger. At this the unbelievers who were assembled there surrounded him, attacked him and beat him severely. He was rescued only by the timely arrival of 'Abbâs ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib (the Prophet's uncle) who shouted out to the people saying that the person they were assaulting belonged to the Gifârî tribe by whose territory the Quraysh trade caravans passed. At this the people stopped beating 'Abû Dharr. On the following day he did the same thing, was again assaulted and was similarly rescued by 'Abbâs.[1]

The authorities differ regarding the exact date of 'Abû Dharr's conversion, some placing it rather late in the Makkan period. The circumstances narrated, however, correspond with the situation characteristic of the early phase of public propagation. Besides the case of 'Abû Dharr, however, there were other individuals like 'Abû Mûsâ al-'Ash'ârî ('Abd Allâh ibn Qays)[2] and Mu'ayqib ibn 'Abî Fâṭimah al-Dawsî[3] about whom there is no doubt that they had come to Makka and embraced Islam much earlier than the migration to Abyssinia.

The instances cited above illustrate the ways in which Islam made headway among the Arabs. At least three lines of development may be identified. In the first place, those who had been inclined towards monotheism prior to the rise of Islam, such as the *ḥanîfs*, rather readily came within its fold. The conversion of 'Amr ibn 'Abasah from outside Makka and of 'Ubayd Allah ibn Jaḥsh and, to some extent, of Sa'îd ibn Zayd ibn 'Amr are instances in point. Secondly, the traders and visitors who came to Makka on various occasions naturally came to know about the new movement. Some of them grew curious about the Prophet because of the malpropaganda of the Quraysh leaders, met him in confidence and ultimately embraced Islam. The instances of Ṭufayl ibn 'Amr al-Dawsî and Ḍimâd al-'Azdî are illustrative of this process. Thirdly, the non-Makkan converts like them and other visitors carried the message of Islam to their respective peoples and places. Being thus informed about the appearance of the Prophet and of Islam, some of the more inquisitive souls like 'Abû Dharr al-Ghifârî came to Makka to ascertain the facts and embraced Islam. That by all these processes Islam had been penetrating into the heart of Arabia is shown by the interesting case of

1. *Bukhârî*, no. 3861; *'Usd al-Ghâbah*, I, pp.301-303.
2. *Ibid.*, III, pp.245-246, V, pp.308-309.
3. *Ibid.*, IV, pp. 402-403.

Buraydah ibn al-Ḥaṣîb ibn 'Abd Allah and his people. It is stated that he came with some 80 families of his tribe, met the Prophet on his way to Madina during his migration there and all embraced Islam at his hands.[1] The very fact that Buraydah came with so many families of his tribe and thus embraced Islam at a time and place that were otherwise not very suitable for his doing so suggests, as Maudûdî points out,[2] that Buraydah must have had prior information about Islam and the Prophet.

One notable feature of the instances cited above, particularly of the earlier ones, was that on conversion all those persons returned to their peoples, being specifically commissioned by the Prophet to propagate Islam in their respective areas. This shows that not much later than the beginning of public propagation, in fact quite earlier than the migration to Abyssinia, he had already been looking beyond Makka. The migration to Abyssinia in the middle of the fifth year of the mission was in a way an outcome of this expanding outlook. That event constitutes the next important landmark in the progress of Islam. Before dealing with it, however, it is necessary to take into account the orientalists' views about this early phase of the mission and also to note the growth of Makkan opposition to Islam.

1. *Ibid.*, I, pp.175-176.
2. Maududi, *op. cit.*, II, p. 542.

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER XXI

LIST OF EARLY CONVERTS NOT MENTIONED IN THE LIST GIVEN IN IBN ISḤÂQ'S / IBN HISHÂM'S SÎRAH[1]

Banû Hashim:

(51) Ṣafiyyah bint 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib (The Prophet's paternal aunt and Al-Zubayr ibn al-'Awwâm's mother) —*'Usd al-Ghâbah*, V, pp. 492-493.

Banû 'Abd Shams:

(52) Sahlah bint Suhayl ibn 'Amr (wife of 'Abû Ḥudhayfah ibn 'Utbah ibn Rabî'ah). Embraced Islam early (أسلمت قديماً) and migrated with her husband to Abyssinia. — *Al-'Iṣâbah*, IV, pp. 336-337, no. 595 (*Kitâb al-Nisâ'*).

Banû 'Umayyah:

(53) 'Umm Ḥabîbah (Ramlah). 'Abû Sufyân's daughter. She embraced Islam early and migrated with her husband 'Ubayd Allah ibn Jaḥsh to Abyssinia. Subsequently became *'Umm al-Mu'minîn — Ibid.*, pp. 305-306, no. 434., *'Usd al-Ghâbah*, V, pp. 573-574.

Confederate of Banû 'Umayyah:

(54) 'Ubayd Allah ibn Jaḥsh- *Ibid.*

Banû Taym:

(55) 'Umm Rûmân ('Abû Bakr's wife; mother of 'Â'ishah and 'Abd al-Raḥmân ibn 'Abî Bakr). Embraced Islam early. *Al-'Iṣâbah*, IV., pp. 450-452, No. 1271 (*Kitâb al-Nîsa'*); *'Usd al-Ghâbah*, V, 583.

(56) Al-Ḥârith ibn Khâlid ibn Ṣakhr ibn 'Âmir. Embraced Islam early. According to Ibn Isḥâq and others he migrated to Abyssinia with his wife. — *Al-'Iṣâbah*, I, p. 277, No. 1397; *'Usd al-Ghâbah*, I, pp. 335-336.

Banû Asad ibn 'Abd al-'Uzzâ:

(57) Khâlid ibn Ḥizâm (Khadîjah's nephew and Ḥakîm ibn Ḥizâm's brother). Embraced Islam early and died during his migration to Abyssinia. According to one report, the Qur'ânic passage 4:100 ﴿. . .ومن يخرج من بيته مهاجراً إلى الله ورسوله ثم يدركه الموت فقد وقع أجره على الله . . .﴾ was revealed with reference to him. *Al-'Iṣâbah*, I., p. 403, no.

1. See *supra*, pp. 521-524.

2154; *'Usd al-Ghâbah*, II., p. 78.

(58) Al-Aswad ibn Nawfal ibn Khuwaylid ibn Asad (Khadîjah's nephew and Waraqah ibn Nawfal ibn Asad's cousin, i.e., paternal uncle's son). Embraced Islam early and, according to Ibn Isḥâq, went to Abyssinia on the second migration. His father, Nawfal ibn Khuwaylid, was very severe upon the Muslims. — *'Usd al-Ghâbah*, I, pp. 87-88; *Al-'Iṣâbah*, I, p. 46, no. 171.

(59) 'Amr ibn 'Umayyah ibn al-Ḥârith ibn Asad ibn 'Abd al-'Uzzâ. Embraced Islam early and migrated to Abyssinia where he died. *'Usd al-Ghâbah,* IV, p. 85.

(60) Yazîd ibn Zam'ah ibn al-Aswad. He was a nobleman of Quraysh who was consulted on all affairs. Embraced islam early and migrated to Abyssinia —*'Usd al-Ghâbah*, V, p. 110.

Banû Zuhrah:

(61) 'Âmir ibn 'Abî Waqqâṣ (Brother of Sa'd ibn Abî Waqqaṣ, no. 17 above). According to Al-Wâqidî he embraced Islam after only 10 people and the passage Q. 29:8 was revealed with reference to him. According to Al-Balâdhurî, 'Âmir joined the second migration to Abyssinia. — *Al-'Iṣabâh,* II, p. 257, no. 4423.

(62) Ṭulayb ibn Azhar (brother of Al-Muṭṭalib ibn Azhar, no. 19 above). Embraced Islam early, along with his brother, and migrated to Abyssinia where they died — *Al-'Iṣâbah*, II, p. 233, no. 4285; *'Usd al-Ghâbah*, III, p. 64.

(63) 'Abd Allah ibn Shihâb (Maternal grandfather of Imâm al-Zuhrî). Embraced Islam early and migrated to Abyssinia. — *'Usd al-Ghâbah*, III, P. 184; *Al-'Iṣâbah*, II, P. 325, no. 4752.

Confederates of Banû Zuhrah:

(64) 'Utbah ibn Mas'ûd (brother of 'Abd Allah ibn Mas'ûd, no. 21 above). Embraced Islam early and went to Abyssinia on the second migration —*'Usd al-Ghâbah*, III, pp. 366-367; *Al-'Iṣâbah*, II, p. 456, no. 5414.

(65) Miqdâd ibn 'Amr al-Kindî. Embraced Islam very early (وهو قديم الإسلام من السابقين) and migrated to Abyssinia. — *'Usd al-Ghâbah*, IV, pp. 409-411.

(66) Shuraḥbîl ibn Ḥasanah al-Kindî. Embraced Islam early, migrated to Abyssinia, and subsequently to Madina. — *Al-'Iṣâbah*, II, p. 143, no. 3869. *'Usd al-Ghâbah,* II, p. 391. See also nos. 73-76 below).

Banû 'Adiyy:

(67) Zayd ibn al-Khaṭṭâb (consanguine brother of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭâb). Embraced Islam early. When Zayd died in the battle of Yamâmah 'Umar remarked that his brother had preceded him in respect of two good things — acceptance of Islam and attainment of martyrdom. — *'Usd al-Ghâbah*, II, pp. 238-239.

(68) Laylâ bint 'Abî Ḥathmah (Wife of 'Âmir ibn Rabî'ah al-'Anzî, no. 26 above). Embraced Islam early and migrated to Abyssinia with her husband and subsequently to Madina. 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭâb, before his conversion, used to oppress them on account of Islam. — *'Usd al-Ghâbah*, V, pp. 541.

(69) Ma'mar ibn 'Abd Allâh ibn Naḍlah. Embraced Islam very early and went to Abyssinia on the second migration and migrated to Madina at a very late date. — *'Usd al-Gâbah*, IV, p. 400.

(70) 'Adiyy ibn Naḍlah. Embraced Islam early and migrated with his son Nu'mân to Abyssinia. 'Adiyy died in Abyssinia and was succeeded by his son, this being the first case of succession in Islam where both the deceased and the successor were Muslims.— *'Usd al-Ghâbah*, III, p. 398; *Al-'Iṣâbah*, II, p. 471, no. 5491.

(71) Nu'mân ibn 'Adiyy ibn Naḍlah. Embraced Islam early and migrated with his father (no 70 above) and succeeded him on his death — *Ibid.*; also *'Usd al-Ghâbah*, V, pp. 26-27.

(72) 'Urwah ibn 'Uthâthah (uterine brother of 'Amr ibn al-'Âṣ). Embraced Islam very early and migrated to Abyssinia. — *Ibid.*, III, pp. 402-403.

Banû Jumaḥ:

(73) Sufyân ibn Ma'mar ibn Ḥabîb. Embraced Islam early and migrated to Abyssinia with his wife Ḥasanah and their sons Jâbir and Junâdah. —*'Usd al Ghâbah*, II, pp. 321-322; *Al-'Iṣâbah*,II., p. 57, no. 3329.

(74) Ḥasanah ('Umm Shuraḥbîl). Embraced Islam early and migrated to Abyssinia with her husband and sons. *Ibid.*; also *'Usd al-Ghâbah*, V, p. 425.

(75) Jâbir ibn Sufyân (better known as Jâbir ibn Ḥasanah al-Kindî). Embraced Islam early and migrated to Abyssinia with his parents.—*'Usd al-Ghâbah*, I, p .253; II, pp. 321-322; 391; *Al-'Iṣâbah*, I, p. 211, no. 1016; II., p.143 no. 3869.

(76) Junâdah ibn Sufyân (better known as Junâdah ibn Ḥasanah al-Kindî). Embraced Islam early and migrated to Abyssinia with his parents and brother. *'Usd al-Ghâbah*, I, p. 299; *Al-'Iṣâbah* I, p. 246, no. 1205 and the references given under nos. 73-75 above.

(77) Nubayh ibn 'Uthmân ibn Rabî'ah ibn Wahb. Embraced Islam very early and, according to Al-Waqidî, migrated to Abyssinia. — *'Usd al-Ghâbah*, V, p.15; *Al-'Iṣâbah*, III, p. 552, no. 8686.

Banû 'Abd al-Dâr:

(78) Muṣ'ab ibn 'Umayr ibn Hâshim ibn 'Abd Manâf ibn 'Abd al-Dâr. Embraced Islam very early and kept it concealed but was detected by his parents who confined him in the house. He managed to escape and migrated to Abyssinia on the first occasion. It was he whom the Prophet sent to Madina after the first oath of Al-'Aqabah to instruct the *anṣâr* in the Qur'ân. — *'Usd al-Ghâbah*, IV, pp. 368-370; *Al-'Iṣâbah*, III, p. 421, no. 8002.

(79) 'Abû al-Rûm ibn 'Umayr (brother of the above). Embraced Islam very early and migrated to Abyssinia with his brother. — *'Usd al-Ghâbah*, V, p.194.

(80) Firâs ibn al-Naḍr ibn al-Ḥârith. Embraced Islam early and, according to Ibn Isḥâq, migrated to Abyssinia. *Ibid.*, IV, p. 177.

(80a) Jahm ibn Qays ibn 'Abd ibn Shurahbîl. Embraced Islam early and according to Ibn Isḥâq migrated to Abyssinia. *'Usd al-Ghâbah*, I, p. 311, 312; *Al-'Iṣâbah*, I, p. 254, no.1248.

Banû Sahm:

(81) 'Abd Allâh ibn Ḥudhâfah ibn Qays ibn 'Adiyy (brother of no. 42 above). Embraced Islam very early and migrated to Abyssinia on the second occasion with his brother Qays ibn Ḥudhâfah — *'Usd al-Ghâbah*, III., pp.142-143; *Al-'Iṣâbah*, II, p. 296, no. 4622.

(82) Qays ibn Ḥudhâfah (brother of the above). Embraced Islam very early and migrated with his brother to Abyssinia. — *'Usd al-Ghâbah*, IV, p. 211.

(83) 'Abû Qays ibn al-Ḥârith ibn Qays ibn 'Adiyy. Embraced Islam very early and migrated to Abyssinia. — *'Usd al-Ghâbah*, V, pp. 279-280.

(84) 'Abd Allah ibn al-Ḥârith ibn Qays ibn 'Adiyy (brother of the above). Embraced Islam early and migrated to Abyssinia. *Al-'Iṣâbah*, II, p. 292 no. 4605.

(85) Al-Sâ'ib ibn al-Ḥârith ibn Qays ibn 'Adiyy (brother of the above). Embraced Islam very early and migrated to Abyssinia. *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9, no. 3058.

(86) Al-Ḥajjâj ibn al-Ḥârith ibn Qays ibn 'Adiyy (brother of the above). Embraced Islam early and migrated to Abyssinia. — *Ibid.*, I.,311, no. 1615.

(87) Sa'îd ibn al-Ḥârith ibn Qays ibn 'Adiyy (brother of the above). Embraced Islam early and migrated to Abyssimia. — *Ibid.*, II, p. 44, no. 3251.

(88) Bishr ibn al-Ḥârith ibn Qays ibn 'Adiyy. Migrated to Abyssinia. — *'Usd al-Ghâbah*, I, pp.184-185

(89) Hishâm ibn al-'Âṣ ibn Wâ'il (younger brother of 'Amr ibn al-'Aṣ). Embraced Islam early and migrated to Abyssinia. — *'Usd al-Ghâbah*, V, pp. 63-64.

Confederates of Banû Sahm:

(90) 'Umayr ibn Ri'âb. Embraced Islam very early and migrated to Abyssinia. — *'Usd al-Ghâbah*, IV, p.143; *Al-'Iṣâbah*, III, pp. 31-32, no.6032.

(91) Maḥmiyyah ibn Jaz'u (uterine brother of 'Abbâs ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib's wife 'Umm al-Faḍl). Embraced Islam very early and migrated to Abyssinia.-- *'Usd al-Ghâbah*, IV, p. 334; *Al-'Iṣâbah*, III, p.388, no. 7823.

Banû Makhzûm:

(92) Hishâm (or Hâshim) ibn 'Abî Ḥudhayfah ibn al-Mughîrah. Embraced Islam very early and migrated to Abyssinia. — *'Usd al-Ghâbah*, V,

pp. 60-61; *Al-'Iṣabâh*, III, p. 603, no. 8962. See also no. 8910, *ibid.*, p. 593.

(93) Habbâr ibn Sufyân ibn 'Abd al-Asad. Embraced Islan very early and migrated to Abyssinia. — *'Usd al-Ghâbah*, V, p. 54; *Al-'Iṣâbah*, III., p. 599, no. 8930.

(94) 'Abd Allâh ibn Sufyân ibn 'Abd al-Asad (brother of the above). Embraced Islam early and migrated to Abyssinia. — *Al-'Iṣâbah*, II, p. 319, no. 4721.

(95) 'Umm Salamah bint Abî 'Umayyah ibn al-Mughîrah (*'Umm al-Mu'minîn*). Embraced Islam very early and migrated with her first husband, 'Abû Salamah ibn 'Abd al-Asad, to Abyssinia. — *'Usd al-Ghâbah*, V., pp. 588-590; *Al-'Iṣâbah*, IV, pp. 458-460, no. 1309 (*Kitâb al-Nisâ'*).

(96) Salamah ibn Hishâm ibn al-Mughîrah (brother of 'Abû Jahl and paternal cousin of Khâlid ibn al-Walîd). Embraced Islam early and migrated to Abyssinia. On his return from there his relatives tortured him, imprisoned him and prevented him from migrating to Madina. — *'Usd al-Ghâbah*, II, p.341; *Al-'Iṣâbah*, II., pp. 68-69, no. 3403.

Confederates of Banû Makhzûm:

(97) Yâsir (father of 'Ammâr ibn Yâsir, no.47 above, and *ḥalîf* of 'Abû Ḥudhayfah ibn al-Mughîrah). Embraced Islam very early and was very severely tortured on that account. — *'Usd al-Ghâbah*, V, p. 98; also IV, p. 43ff; *Al-'Iṣâbah*, III., pp. 647-648, no. 9208.

(99) 'Abd Allah ibn Yâsir (son of the above). Embraced Islam early and was tortured severely. Both he and his father succumbed to the torture. *Ibid.*

Banû 'Âmir ibn Lu'ayy:

(100) 'Abû Sabrah ibn 'Abî Ruhm (The Prophet's paternal aunt Barrah bint 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib's son). Embraced Islam early and migrated to both Abyssinia and Madina. — *'Usd al-Ghâbah*, V, p. 207; *Al-'Iṣâbah*, IV, p. 84, no. 500 (*Kitâb al-Kunâ*).

(101) 'Umm Kulthûm bint Suhayl ibn 'Amr (wife of the above and daughter of the prominent Quraysh noble and chief Suhayl ibn 'Amr). Embraced Islam early and migrated with her husband to Abys-

sinia. — *'Usd al-Ghâbah*, V, p.613; *Al-'Iṣâbah*, IV., p. 490, no.1473 (*Kitâb al-Nisâ'*).

(102) 'Abd Allah ibn Suhayl ibn 'Amr (brother of the above and of 'Abû Jandal). Embraced Islam early and migrated to Abyssimia.— *'Usd al-Ghâbah*, III., p.181; *Al-'Iṣâbah*, II, p. 322, no. 5736.

(103) 'Abû Jandal ibn Suhayl ibn 'Amr (brother of the above). Embraced Islam early and was on that account tortured by his family. — *'Usd al-Ghâbah*, V., p.160; *Al-'Iṣâbah*, IV, p. 34, no. 203 (*Kitab al-Kuna*)

(104) Sakrân ibn 'Amr (brother of Suhayl ibn 'Amr and Ḥâṭib ibn 'Amr, no. 49 above, and first husband of *'Umm al-Mu'minîn* Sawdah bint Zam'ah. Embraced Islam early and migrated with his wife to Abyssinia. — *'Usd al-Ghâbah* II, pp. 324-325; *Al-'Iṣâbah*, II., p. 59, no. 3337.

(105) Sawdah bint Zam'ah (*'Umm al-Mu'minîn*, previously wife of the above). Embraced Islam early and migrated with her first husband to Abyssinia. — *Ibid*; also *'Usd al-Ghâbah*, V, pp. 485-485; *Al-'Iṣâbah*, IV, pp. 338-339, no. 606 (*Kitâb al-Nisâ'*)

(106) Yaqaẓah bint 'Alqamah (wife of Salîṭ ibn 'Amr, no.48 above, brother of Suhayl ibn 'Amr). Embraced Islam early and migrated to Abyssinia with her hushand. — *'Usd al-Ghâbah* V, pp. 625-626.

(107) Mâlik ibn Zam'ah (*'Umm al-Mu'mimîn* Sawdah's brother). Embraced Islam early and migrated to Abyssinia with his wife 'Amrah bint al-Sa'dî. — *'Usd al-Ghâbah*, IV., p.280; Ibn Hishâm, 329.

(108) 'Amrah bint al-Sa'dî (wife of the above). Embraced Islam early and migrated with her husband to Abyssinia. *Ibid.*; also *'Usd al-Ghâbah*, V, p. 510.

(109) Ibn 'Umm Maktûm ('Amr ibn 'Umm Maktûm, maternal cousin of *'Umm al-Mu'minîn* Khadîjah). Embraced Islam early and subsequently migrated to Madina. *Al-'Iṣâbah*, II, 523-824, no. 5764.

Banû Fihr ibn Mâlik:

(110) Suhayl ibn Bayḍâ'. Embraced Islam early and migrated to Abyssinia and also to Madina. — *'Usd al-Ghâbah*, II, p.370; *Al-'Iṣâbah*, II,

p. 91, no. 3561.

(111) Sa'îd ibn 'Abd Qays. Embraced Islam early and migrated to Abyssinia. — *'Usd al-Ghâbah*, II, p.312; *Al-'Iṣâbah*, II, p. 49, No. 3272.

(112) 'Amr ibn al-Ḥârith ibn Zuhayr. Embraced Islam early and, according to Ibn Isḥâq, migrated to Abyssinia. — *'Usd al-Ghâbah*, IV, p. 95; *Al-'Iṣâbah* II, p. 530, no. 5799.

(113) 'Uthmân ibn 'Abd Ghanm ibn Zuhayr (son of 'Abd al-Raḥmân ibn 'Awf's paternal aunt). Embraced Islam early and migrated to Abyssinia. *'Usd al-Ghâbah*, III, p. 375; *Al-'Iṣâbah*, II, p. 461, no. 5444.

Banû 'Abd ibn Quṣayy:

(114) Ṭulayb ibn 'Umayr ibn Wahb (The Prophet's paternal aunt 'Arwah bint 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib's son). Embraced Islam early and migrated to Abyssinia. — *'Usd al-Ghâbah*, III, p,65; *Al-'Iṣâbah* II, p. 233, no. 4288.

Slaves and others:

(115) Bilâl ibn Rabâḥ (slave to 'Umayyah ibn Khalaf). Embraced Islam very early and was severely tortured on that account. According to one report, Bilâl was one of the first seven persons, including the Messenger of Allah, to publicly announce their conversion. The other five were 'Abu Bakr, Ṣuhayb. 'Ammâr, Khabbâb and Sumayyah—Ibn Hishâm, 317-318; Ibn Sa'd, III, 232-233; *'Usd al-Ghâbah*, I, pp. 206-209.

(116) Sumayyah (slave maid to 'Abû Ḥudhayfah and 'Ammâr ibn Yâsir's mother). She embraced Islam along with her husband and sons, was inhumanly tortured and ultimately killed by Abû Jahl. She is the first lady martyr in Islam. — Ibn Hishâm, 319-320; Ibn Sa'd, III., pp.233,246-249; *'Usd al-Ghâbah* V, pp. 481-482.

(117) Ḥamâmah (Bilâl's mother). Embraced Islam early and was tortured on that account. *Al-'Istî'âb*, IV, p. 1813, no. 3301.

(118) 'Abû Fukayhah (slave to Banû 'Abd al-Dâr). Embraced Islam and was therefore persecuted. — *'Usd al-Ghâbah*, V, p.273.

(119) 'Âmir ibn Fuhayrah (slave to Ṭufayl ibn al-Ḥârith). Embraced Islam early and was persecuted. — Ibn Hishâm, p. 318; *'Usd al-Ghâbh*, III, pp. 90-91.

(120) Lubaynah or Lubaybah. Ibn Hishâm mentions her as a slave maid to Banû Mu'ammal. Embraced Islam early and was persecuted, particularly by 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭâb before his conversion. — Ibn Hishâm, 319.

(121) 'Umm 'Ubays (slave maid to Banû Zuhrah or Banû Taym). Embraced Islam very early and was persecuted on that account. — Ibn Hishâm, p. 318; *'Usd al-Ghâbah*, V, 601.

(122) Zannîrah al-Rûmiyyah (slave maid to Banû 'Adiyy or Banû Makhzûm). Embraced Islam very early and suffered persecution. — Ibn Hishâm p. 318; *'Usd al-Ghâbah*, V, 462.

(123) Nahdiyyah and her daughter (slave maid to Banû 'Abd al-Dâr). Embraced Islam very early and suffered persecution. — Ibn Hishâm, pp. 318-319.

(124) 'Umm 'Ayman Barakah bint Tha'labah (family-maid of the Messenger of Allah). Embraced Islam very early and migrated to both Abyssinia and Madina. — *'Usd al-Ghâbah*, V, p. 567.

(125) Miḥjan ibn al-'Adra' al-Aslamî. Embraced Islam early. — *Al-'Iṣâbah*, III, pp.366-367, no. 7738.

(126) Mas'ûd ibn Rabî'ah ibn 'Amr (of Banû al-Hûn ibn Khuzaymah). Embraced Islam very early, before the Prophet's entry into the Dâr al-Arqam. — *'Usd al-Ghâbah*, IV, p. 357.

CHAPTER XXII

MARGOLIOUTH'S THEORY OF "ISLAM AS A SECRET SOCIETY"

Apart from the question of their views regarding *waḥy,* the orientalist's assumptions regarding the early phase of the mission revolve mainly round three other themes, namely, (a) the period of the so-called "secret preaching"; (b) the character and motives of the early converts and (c) the contents and teachings of the early revelations.

It may be recalled that Ibn Isḥâq speaks of the Prophet's having initially conducted his preachings "secretly". We have already examined this statement of his and have shown that in the light of the other facts mentioned by him in this connection and also in the light of the Qur'ânic evidence it means personal contacts and individual approaches rather than an attempt on the Prophet's part to keep his mission a "secret" to himself and his followers.[1] This sense of Ibn Isḥâq's statement is at least rightly understood by Muir who states categorically that there is hardly any ground to "assign to the Prophet three years of secret preaching and private solicitation". Muir observes that for "some succeeding period" after the Prophet had received his call "his efforts would be naturally directed to individual persuasion and entreaty, but there is nothing to warrant the belief that the Prophetic claim, once assumed, was ever confined as an esoteric creed within the limits of a narrow circle." He further observes that after the short period of individual persuasion the Prophet received the command "to rise and preach" and forthwith "his appeal was made to the whole community of Mecca."[2]

Similarly Muir generally accepts what the sources say about the early converts, their character and reasons for conversion. He also points out that they were mostly the Prophet's relatives and close firends.[3] On the basis of this latter fact Muir observes: "It is strongly corroborative of Mahomet's sincerity that the earliest converts to Islam were not only of upright character, but his own bosom friends and people of his household; who, being intimately acquainted with his private life, could not fail otherwise to have detected those discrepancies which ever more or less exist between the pro-

1. *Supra*, pp. 516-517.
2. Muir, *The life of Mahomet*, 3rd edn, 60.
3. *Ibid.*, 56-59.

fessions of the hypocritic deceiver abroad and his actions at home."[1] In making this observation Muir actually supports Sprenger's inference which he acknowledges a little later on as follows: "I agree with Sprenger in considering 'the faith of Abu Bekr the greatest guarantee of the sincerity of Mohammed in the beginning of his career' — and, indeed, in a modified sense, throughout his life."[2]

In sharp contrast with these views are those of Margoliouth. His entire approach is geared to showing that the Prophet was a deceiver and imposter who, being ambitious and a cool judge of human character, made calculated preparations for playing the role of a Prophet and, for that purpose, pretended the receipt of revelations from God. Proceeding from that premise Margoliouth twists the sense of Ibn Isḥâq's statement and builds up a theory of a "secret society", saying that at the age of forty Muḥammad (ﷺ) placed himself at the head of a secret society.[3] Indeed Margoliouth captions his chapter on the early phase of the Prophet's mission as "Islam as a secret society".[4] And to bring home this theme he not only makes tendentious remarks about the form, manner and matter of the revelations but imputes ulterior motives to almost everyone of the earliest converts, twisting the facts to support and sustain his theory.

I. THE INNUENDO AGAINST 'ABÛ BAKR

To begin with, Margoliouth takes up the fact of 'Abû Bakr's being one of the very earliest converts and his role in winning over a few others to the cause of Islam. Margoliouth states that "in his thirty-ninth year Mohammed became acquainted or became intimate with Abu Bakr". The latter, it is said, in spite of his "business ability", "considerable fortune", kindly and complaisant disposition and "charming manners" which made "his company much sought after" by the Makkans, was nonetheless a "hero-worshipper, if there was one", possessing "a quality common in women, but sometimes present in men, i.e., readiness to follow the fortunes of someone else with complete and blind devotion, never questioning or looking back".[5] Margoliouth further says that the Prophet, being a shrewd judge of man, perceived this quality of 'Abû Bakr's and used it. Hence, when the latter's call

1. *Ibid.*, 54.
2. *Ibid.*, 56, n.
3. Margoliouth, *Mohammed*, 3rd edn., p. 72.
4. *Ibid.*, Ch. III.
5. *Ibid.*, 83.

came "a year after their intimacy had begun" the proselytising was done "not by Mohammed but by Abu Bakr."[1] Margoliouth asserts that Muḥammad (ﷺ) thus assumed the role of "a medium"[2] professing to produce messages from another world and this was made possible "due to the receptivity of Abu Bakr".[3]

Before proceeding further with Margoliouth's other remarks in this connection it would be worthwhile to point out the untenability of the above mentioned statements. He does not cite any authoirty to support the assertion that it was only a year before his call that the Prophet became acquainted or intimate with 'Abû Bakr. The sources indicate, howeever, that the two were intimate with each other since their boyhood. Even according to common sense it is highly unlikely that the two should have remained unknown to each other for so long a time as nearly 37 years,[4] in view of the fact that they both lived in the same quarter of the then very small town of Makka and in a society where each person saw a good deal of the other. Margoliouth's statement is also inconsistent with what he acknowledges to be 'Abû Bakr's distinctive quality, namely, his "charming manners" which made his company "much sought after" by his people. Evidently such a man could not have remained unacquainted with one of his own locality who, at least five years prior to his claim to prophethood, had acted as an arbitartor in the famous dispute arising out of the rebuilding of the Ka'ba.

The reason given by Margoliouth for 'Abû Bakr's acceptance of Islam, namely, his being simply a hero worshipper ready to follow the fortunes of someone else is totally conjectural and inapplicable here; for the simple fact that at the very inception of his mission neither was there any particular development marking the Prophet out to be a hero nor did fortune smile on him in any way. It therefore remains to be explained why an individual with 'Abû Bakr's business acumen should have recognized a hero in the Prophet before he even gained a single convert to his cause and before fortune took any turn in favour of him. After all, 'Abû Bakr had hitherto been no less wealthy and no less known in his society than the Prophet.

1. *Ibid.*, 83-84.

2. *Ibid.*, 84. It is to be noted that virtually following Margoliouth in such characterization of the Prophet, Maxime Rodinson calls him a "megaphone" and Bell calls him a "mouthpiece" of God (*T.G.U.O.S*, VII, 22).

3. *Ibid.*,

4. The two were almost of equal age, 'Abû Bakr being two years junior to the Prophet.

Margoliouth seems to suggest that 'Abû Bakr was the very first person to believe in the Prophet. This is celarly at variance with the unanimous statement of all the reports that Khadîjah (r.a.) was the first person to believe in the Prophet. Margoliouth skips over the question of the first convert by providing a sort of a back-door foot-note stating: "Nöldeke, *Z.D.M.G.*, lii,16-21, makes the order of converts Khadijah, Zaid, Ali, some slaves, Sa'd, son of Abu Wakkas, and Abu Bakr, with other Kurashites."[1] It must at once be pointed out that it is not Nöldeke, but the sources, which unanimously mention Khadîjah (r.a.) as the first convert. The reports of course differ regarding the order of conversion of the other persons mentioned, particularly Zayd, 'Alî and 'Abû Bakr. This difference in the reports rather highlights the fact that in so far as Zayd and 'Alî were concerned 'Abû Bakr had no hand in their conversion. Nöldeke's "order" assigns the eighth or so place to 'Abû Bakr. Margoliouth does not give any reason for his regarding 'Abû Bakr an earlier or rather the earliest convert to Islam. The sources indicate that only four or five persons were converted at the instance of 'Abû Bakr. The other early converts, whose number was about ten times that figure, embraced Islam either in consequence of their own enquiries or as a result of the Prophet's preachings to them. Margoliouth himself recogniszes that there were at least some one hundred converts before the commencement of what he calls "publicity".[2] As will be seen presently, in spite of his twisting of various facts Margoliouth is unable to establish 'Abû Bakr's connection with the conversion of even ten persons. Hence nothing could be a worse exaggeration than the assertion that the Prophet's assumption of what is called the "role of a medium" was due to the receptivity of 'Abû Bakr or that the work of "proselytising" was done mainly by 'Abû Bakr.

In spite of his misleading statement about 'Abû Bakr and the commencement of the mission Margoliouth could not ignore the position of Khadîjah (r.a.) and the absence of 'Abû Bakr's role in her conversion. But as usual Margoliouth twists and misinterprets the facts in her case too. He does not accept as historical the incident of her meeting Waraqah ibn Nawfal after her husband's receipt of the revelation. Nevertheless Margoliouth asserts that her mind might "have been prepared by her cousin's speculations and studies for a revolt from the Meccan religion."[3] Having said so Margoliouth suggests

1. Margoliouth, *op. cit.*, p. 89, n.
2. *Ibid.*,112.
3. *Ibid.*,93.

that "maternal grief over her dead sons" was a factor in the process of her conversion.[1] To substantiate this assertion he cites a tradition[2] in which she is reported to have asked the Prophet whether their dead children were in hell. "To this question", writes Margoliouth, "the Prophet in reply produced a revelation: 'And whoso believe and are followed by their seed in faith unto them shall we attach their seed.'[3] A brilliant answer; since thereby the bereaved mother was assured that the eternal happiness of her dead sons was made conditional on her believing; .... No wonder Khadijah devoted herself heart and soul to the mission, and received the promise of a very special place in paradise."[4]

The incorrectness and anachronism in the above statements of Margoliouth are too obvious. He rejects the fact of Khadîjah's (r.a.) meeting with Waraqah; yet the inference about the latter's influence upon her is based on the account of that very meeting; for there is no other report which makes even the slightest allusion to her ever coming in contact with him or even to his having embraced or possessed a knowledge of Christianity. If his studies and speculations prepared her mind for a revolt against Makkan religion, as Margoliouth would have us believe, it would be only natural on her part to consult him as soon as her husband spoke to her about the receipt of revelation. Secondly, it is totally anachronistic to suggest that "maternal grief over her dead sons" entered the process of her conversion. Her reported conversation with the Prophet regarding their dead sons and the revelation of the passage (52:21) in question were both long subsequent to her conversion and support for the Prophet. Thirdly, Margoliouth grossly misinterprets the passage 52:21. It does in no way make salvation of the "seed" dependent upon the parents' faith. Even according to Margoliouth's own translation of the passage, the "seed" also must "follow" their parents "in faith". In fact the passage in question only emphasizes individual accountability and its last clause, which Margoliouth does not reproduce, unequivocally stated: "Every person is a pledge for his own deeds".[5]

Margoliouth in effect contradicts his innuendo only a few lines later on

1. *Ibid.*
2. *Musnad*, VI, 68.
3. Q. 52:21.
4. Margoliouth, *op. cit.*, 93-94, citing *Musnad*, IV, 356.
5. The last clause of the *'âyah* 52:21 runs thus: ﴿كل امرئ بما كسب رهين﴾

where, referring to the incident of *fatrah* (pause in the coming of *waḥy*) and Khadîjah's (r.a.) having consoled the Prophet, it is said that "the strong-minded woman" compelled her husband "to adhere to the line which he had taken".[1] Clearly Margoliouth does not see that if Waraqah's studies and speculations had prepared her mind for a revolt against the Makkan religion and if she had already been so strongly convinced of the truth of the mission that she "compelled" or persuaded her husband to carry on, there is no need to invoke her grief over her dead sons and the Prophet's alleged assurances of eternal happiness for them as a reason for her believing!

In making the above mentioned statement about Khadîjqh's (r.a.) role Margoliouth appears to have realized that it is somewhat inconsistent with his theory about 'Abû Bakr's role. Hence he hastens to add: "But indeed he [the Prophet] was compelled to continue by 'Abû Bakr who immediately started proselytising."[2] It must be pointed out that the Prophet was *not compelled* to continue his work by anyone, neither by Khadîjah nor by 'Abû Bakr (r.a.). Nor could there be any question of the Prophet's having persisted in his mission simply because of the alleged conversions made by 'Abû Bakr; for, even according to Margoliouth, "the first year of 'Abû Bakr's propaganda produced three converts."[3] Clearly, this was no encouraging number nor any compelling ground for any person to persevere in his mission. The inherent contradiction in Margoliouth's approach is that he proceeds from the premise of the Prophet's ambition and calculated plans to play the role of a messenger of God but here it is suggested that the latter was compelled to carry on his work mainly because of the "receptivity" of 'Abû Bakr and his proselytising work. It is also pertinent to ask, if 'Abû Bakr was credulous and a hero worshipper ready to follow the fortunes of someone, why the others should have succumbed to his "propaganda"? Were they also similarly hero worshippers ready to follow someone's fortune?

A clearer refutation of Margoliouth's theory lies, however, in what he actually cites as the instances of conversion made by 'Abû Bakr. Margoliouth states that at the Prophet's desire 'Abû Bakr conducted his propaganda "with profound secrecy" and that "from the first" he was helped by an Abyssinian slave, Bilâl, who was, in Margoliouth's word, the "third"

1. Margoliouth, *op. cit.*, 95.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*

convert to Islam and to whom might be attributed "some of the Abyssinian elements" in the Prophet's productions. Bilâl was "after a time purchased and manumitted by 'Abû Bakr".[1]

Here Margoliouth makes a number of misstatements. It is not an established fact that Bilâl was the third convert to Islam, nor is it at all true that the so-called Abyssinian elements in the Qur'ân had their origin in Bilâl. Most important of all, his conversion was no "secret" affair. On the contrary, it was because of his open profession of Islam and the resultant inhuman persecution inflicted upon him by his master that moved the Prophet and 'Abû Bakr and led to his purchase and manumission by the latter.[2] Margoliouth clearly misleads his readers when he cites Bilâl's case by way of showing 'Abû Bakr's "secret" proselytising work. The incidents of persecution of Bilâl, who was undoubtedly one of the very earliest converts, and his consequent purchase and manumission by 'Abû Bakr, were not and could not have been matters of what is called "profound secrecy". They rather decisively belie and explode the theory of secret proselytisation.

II. THE IMPUTATION AGAINST 'UTHMÂN IBN 'AFFÂN (R.A.) AND OTHERS

Thus having dealt with what Margoliouth calls the third convert to Islam, he takes up the case of 'Uthmân ibn 'Affân (r.a.). Margoliouth says that the latter loved the Prophet's fair daughter Ruqayyah (r.a.) and "learned to his chagrin that she had been betrothed to another." He therefore poured his grief into the firendly ears of 'Abû Bakr whose conversation, states Margoliouth, gave him hope that the Prophet's daughter could still be his if only he acknowledged the latter's mission. The Prophet presently passed by. "Abu Bakr whispered something into his ear and the affair was arranged. Othman became a believer and Rukayyah became his wife."[3]

It is of course a fact that the Prophet's two daughters, Ruqayyah and 'Umm Kulthûm (r.a.) had before his call to Prophethood been betrothed respectively to two sons of 'Abû Lahab, his uncle. It is also a fact that subsequently, after the break-up of that engagement, both the daughters were successively married to 'Uthmân (r.a.), one after the death of the other. Margoliouth grossly twists these facts to build up his story about 'Uthmân's

1. *Ibid.*, 95-96.
2. See Ibn Hishâm, I, 317-319.
3. Margoliouth, *op. cit.*, 97.

conversion and thus attempts, at one stroke, to castigate the character of all the three persons involved. Margoliouth of course does not cite any source for this story of his simply because he could lay his hand on none. But apart from the question of source the bare elements of the story and common sense belie Margoliouth's innuendo. 'Uthmân (r.a.) was of course converted at 'Abû Bakr's instance and that also in the first year of the mission. But the engagement of the Prophet's daughters with 'Abû Lahab's sons was broken up in the third or fourth year of the mission, and that also not at all at the Prophet's desire but solely at the instance of 'Abû Lahab and his wife 'Umm Jamîl who by then had turned deadly against him on account of his mission. It is also to be noted that 'Abû Lahab broke the engagement not of Ruqayyah (r.a.) alone but of the other daughter of the Prophet too. At the initial stage of his mission the Prophet was naturally eager to have his own kith and kin solidly behind him. It is thus simply unreasonable to assume that he would at that stage contemplate taking such a step as was sure to create disruption and division within his own clan and family and to alienate his own uncle 'Abû Lahab who till that time had obviously shown no hostility towards him. The unwisdom of the alleged attempt would have been obvious to any person with an iota of common sense; for the alleged step would have at the most gained the adhesion of only one individual at the cost of the sure estrangement and hostility of an uncle and an influential family of his own clan. No reasonable person would have failed to see the net loss in the alleged deal.

Again, 'Uthmân belonged to the sister clan of 'Abd Shams which, like Banû Hâshim, was from among the sons of 'Abd Manâf. Also 'Uthmân's maternal grandmother, Bayḍâ', daughter of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, was the Prophet's paternal aunt. Hence 'Uthmân was no stranger to the Prophet's family. If, therefore, he was fascinated by Ruqayyah (r.a.) he could easily have proposed to marry her instead of waiting to see her betrothed to another person and then to disclose the suppressed fascination to 'Abû Bakr. The utter falsehood of the story is highlighted by the dramatic touch given by Margoliouth to it. It is stated that while 'Uthmân was thus disclosing his secret to 'Abû Bakr (r.a.) the Prophet "presently passed by", "Abu Bakr whispered something into his ear and the affair was arranged". As if the Prophet was passing by with a ready intention to break the engagement of his daughters so that he gave an instant decision regarding so serious a matter without hesiatating to consider the pros and cons of the step, its con-

sequences upon the happiness of his daughters, upon his own mission and upon his relationship with his own uncle and family who had admittedly not yet shown any hostility towards him. Last but not least, if a promise of getting the hand of Ruqqyyah was 'Uthmân's (r.a.) sole consideration for conversion, why should he have waited for three years or so to have that promise fulfilled?

After having fabricated this absurd story about 'Uthmân's conversion Margoliouth deals one by one with the conversion of ten other persons, namely, (1) Khâlid ibn Sa'îd, (2) 'Abd Allah ibn Mas'ûd, (3) 'Uthmân ibn Maẓ'ûn, (4) Sa'îd ibn Zayd ibn 'Amr ibn Nufayl, (5) 'Abd al-Raḥmân ibn 'Awf, (6) Miqdâd, (7) 'Utbah ibn Ghazwân, (8) Al-Zubayr ibn al-'Awwâm (9) Sa'd ibn 'Abî Waqqâṣ and (10) Ṭalḥah ibn 'Ubayd Allah.[1] Of these persons nos. 5, 8, 9 and 10 were no doubt converted at 'Abû Bakr's instance. No.1, Khâlid ibn Sa'îd may also be included in that group. The rest, however, cannot be regarded as 'Abû Bakr's converts even according to the facts mentioned by Margoliouth himself. Thus with regard to no. 2., 'Abd Allah ibn Mas'ûd, the tradition cited simply shows that he met the Prophet when the latter was going to some place accompanied by 'Abû Bakr. The meeting of course led to 'Abd Allah's conversion; but no special credit goes to 'Abû Bakr simply because he was with the Prophet at the time of the meeting. Nor does the tradition suggest that 'Abû Bakr took the Prophet there and introduced 'Abd Allah to him. Similarly the tradition cited in connection with no. 3., 'Uthmân ibn Maẓ'ûn, says that he came one day to sit with the Prophet and there accepted Islam after some conversation.[2] There is no mention of 'Abû Bakr at all in connection with 'Uthmân ibn Maẓ'ûn's conversion. Regarding no. 4, Sa'îd ibn Zayd ibn 'Amr ibn Nufayl, Margoliouth himself notes that though dissatisfaction with pagan beliefs might have led Zayd to Islam, "he is not reckoned among 'Abû Bakr's proselytes."[3] With regard to nos. 6 and 7 (Miqdâd and 'Utbah) the facts mentioned by Margoliouth do in no way indicate 'Abû Bakr's connection with their conversion.[4] Thus the instances and facts cited by Margoliouth show that not more than ten persons at the most were converted at 'Abû Bakr's instance. This number, as already indicated, was only a fraction of the total number of the early con-

1. *Ibid.*, 98-99.
2. *Ibid.*, 99 (citing Musnad I, 318).
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*, 99-100

verts. Nor do these instances sustain the theory of a secret propaganda drive conducted by 'Abû Bakr on behalf of the Prophet.

III. THE ALLEGED EVIDENCES OF SECRECY

To sustain the theory of a secret society Margoliouth advances a number of assumptions. For instance, he alludes to the famous remark of the Prophet that every person to whom Islam was presented at first expressed some hesitation and asked some questions about it excepting 'Abû Bakr who accepted it unhesitatingly and unquestioningly. Margoliouth interprets this statement of the Prophet as indicating that from the first the proselytes were required to undertake "some serious obligation, such as those who are admitted to secret societies undertake" and that the "repugnance" spoken of was due to the anxiety which the converts felt in committing themselves to something for life, "specially when that something is an unknown quantity, a course of which the issue is unknown".[1]

Needless to point out that this statement of Margoliouth is a pure conjecture without any evidence in its support. The hesitation spoken of by the Prophet was not due to the requirement to undertake any serious and unspecified obligation, of which there is no mention whatsoever in the sources, but simply to the usual heart-searchings on the part of any person who thinks of taking such a momentous step in his life as changing his religion. Margoliouth's own admission that the supposed obligation was unspecified falsifies the assumption that it was either "serious" or characteristic of a secret organization. For, it is manifestly absurd to characterize something as "serious" when there is no indication whatsoever of the nature and extent of that supposed something. Indeed, there is no mention in the sources that the converts were ever required to undertake any secret obligation. The only obligation was to believe in and worship the One Only God and, of course, to believe that Muḥammad (ﷺ) was His Messenger. Margoliouth's assumption is an obvious misinterpretation of a plain statement of the Prophet in appreciation of 'Abû Bakr's devotion and faith without any reflection on the others.

In the same strain and for the same purpose of bringing home the theme of "Islam as a secret society" Margoliouth states that *ṣalah* or prayer of the Muslims was performed in "strict privacy", their meetings "were fixed with

1. *Ibid.*, 101-102.

great caution"[1] and the Prophet "produced" revelations through the process of "mysterious seances" in the presenece of only the converts, excluding strangers from the scene.[2] It is further stated that the Prophet used to go into seclusion and "hiding places", such as hill-caves, in order to produce revelation.[3] "Moreover", states Margoliouth, "in the early period none were admitted to see the Prophet in the character of whom the missionary was not sure, and who had not been prepared to venerate."[4]

These remarks of Margoliouth suggest as if, after the receipt of revelation the Prophet had withdrawn himself from public view and conducted the work of gaining converts only through a secret agent! Anyone conversant with the facts knows that such was never the case. It was only at a subsequent stage when the Prophet's life was threatened by the Makkan opposition that his followers took care not to admit suspicious characters to his presence before taking prior steps for his safety. But neither then, nor earlier, did the Prophet remain out of public sight and approach, nor was he constantly guarded by his folllowers. Margoliouth's statement in this regard and also his statement relating to the Muslims' prayers and meetings seem to have reference to the situation when the Prophet took Dâr al-Arqam as the venue for meetings and prayers.[5] Indeed Margoliouth specifically refers to this fact a little afterwards[6] as yet another argument in support of his theory. The taking of Dâr-al-Arqam as the venue for prayer and meetings was the result of publicity and the consequent Makkan opposition to the mission. It was in no way a consequence of the secret and esoteric nature of the mission. As regards Margoliouth's remarks about the manner of the coming of revelation, it has already been dealt with eariler.[7] It may only be noted here that whatever might have been the manner, the fact and claim of the receipt of revelation by the Prophet was no secret thing, neither to the "proselytes" nor to the Makkan unbelievers.

A third assumption of Margoliouth's is that the Prophet, according to

1. *Ibid.*, 103.
2. *Ibid.*, 104-105.
3. *Ibid.*, 108.
4. *Ibid.*, 106.
5. See *supra*, p.519 and *infra*, p.652.
6. Margoliouth, *op. cit.*, 108.
7. *Supra*, pp. 410-422.

him, discouraged publicity. In support of this assumption Margoliouth cites the case of the conversion of 'Amr ibn 'Abasah. He is stated to have offered to join the Prophet openly, "but", says Margoliouth, "was forbidden to do so, since he would serve the cause better by returning to his own country".[1] The circumstances of 'Amr ibn 'Abasah's conversion have been related earlier.[2] The Prophet asked him not to declare his conversion at Makka in order to enable him to escape persecution at the hands of the Makkan unbelievers who did not distinguish between inhabitants of the city and visitors to it in this respect. In thus warning 'Amr the Prophet did not intend to keep the mission a secret. He had similarly asked 'Abû Dhar al-Ghifârî not to venture an open announcement of his change of faith at Makka. He disregarded the counsel of caution only to be severely manhandled by the unbelievers.[3] Such warnings given by the Prophet to converts from outside Makka and such assaults by the Makkans on those of the converts who disregarded the warnings only emphasize the undisguised nature of the mission. They were in no way symptomatic of a supposedly secret and esoteric organization.

Another highly prejudiced assertion of Margoliouth's is that the Prophet and 'Abû Bakr, according to him, used their wealth to retain their hold upon the converts by providing them "temporal relief". To substantiate this assertion Margoliouth refers to the Prophet's or rather the Qur'ân's declaration that he sought no material gains through his mission and "to the end", emphasizes Margoliouth, the Prophet "refused either to enjoy the Alms himself, or to allow any members of his family to enjoy them. The most successful of the mediums play this card".[4] Margoliouth further says that manumission of believers was declared to be a pious duty and 'Abû Bakr acted on that principle.[5] It is also alleged that several persons were lured into Islam by bribes.[6]

It is not surprising that Margoliouth would thus twist a fact which is one of the strongest proofs of the absence of any sordid motive on the Prophet's part in his mission to show that he used his wealth to further the cause of his

1. Margoliouth, *op. cit.*, 107-108.
2. *Supra*, pp. 536-537.
3. *Supra*, pp. 537-538.
4. Margoliouth, *op. cit.*, 113.
5. *Ibid.*, 109.
6. *Ibid.*, 114, citing *Musnad*, II, 212 and III, 175.

mission. But the reader is simply unable to see how even this twisting of the fact could be an evidence in support of the theory of a secret society. That 'Abû Bakr purchased and manumitted a number of slaves who had embraced Islam and had in consequence been subjected to the most inhuman persecution by their masters is well known. It is also true that several converts, who lost their trade and means of livelihood on account of their change of faith were supported and maintained not by the Prophet, nor by 'Abû Bakr only, but by other well-to-do converts. These were instances of mutual help and steps to rescue the weak and poor converts from persecution and death at the hands of the unbelievers. In any case they are in no way illustrative of a secret and esoteric organization. No person could have been subjected to persecution, nor would a trader or craftsman have incurred the hostility of their community and thus lose their custom unless their change of faith was known. Nor could the purchase and manumission of slaves in the then Makkan society be in any way a secret transaction.

More glaringly untrue is the allegation that some persons were lured into Islam by bribes. In support of this allegation Margoliouth cites *Musnad* III, 175 where a report by 'Anas (r.a.) occurs to the effect that one day a man came to the Prophet and begged him for some material help. He gave the man an entire flock of sheep then grazing between two hills. The man returned to his people and called upon them to accept Islam, adding that Muḥammad (ﷺ) was so generous that he bestowed like a person who did not care about the exhaustion of his wealth nor about his becoming poor thereby. 'Anas further says that even though sometimes a man accepted Islam out of sordid motives, not a day passed before his faith became dearer to him than all the wealth of the world.[1] Clearly, Margoliouth has sought support for his allegation from this report. In doing so he has either misunderstood or ignored the three obvious aspects of the report. In the first place, he ignores the fact that 'Anas gives this report of an incident which took place at Madina and at a very late stage in the Prphet's life, and not at Makka, not to speak of the period when he is alleged to have been acting as the chief of a secret society. For 'Anas was an inhabitant of Madina and was born only ten years

1. *Musnad*, III, 175. The text of the report runs as follows:

(حدثنا عبد الله حدثني أبي ثنا مؤمل ثنا حماد عن ثابت عن أنس أن رجلا أتى النبي ﷺ يسأله فأعطاه رسول الله ﷺ غنما بين جبلين فأتى الرجل قومه فقال أي قومي أسلموا فو الله إن محمدا ليعطي عطية رجل ما يخاف الفاقة أو قال الفقر قال وحدثنا ثابت قال: قال أنس إن كان الرجل ليأتي النبي ﷺ ما يريد إلا أن يصيب عرضا من الدنيا أو قال دنيا يصيبها فما يمسي من يومه ذلك حتى يكون دينه أحب إليه أو قال أكبر عليه من الدنيا وما فيها)

before the migration.[1] Secondly, the report clearly states that the Prophet's gift was made on the person's asking for help. The transaction was in no way even an indirect bribery, for it was neither secret nor made conditional on the recipient's or his peoples' acceptance of Islam. Nor does the report say that they became Muslims in consequence of that gift. Thirdly, lest there should be any confusion regarding the report 'Anas very clearly states that even if material considerations led a person to embrace Islam, he was soon a changed man and valued his faith far more than any earthly gain. Thus, far from giving an instance of the use of money for gaining converts the report merely emphasizes the Prophet's liberality on the one hand and the edifying influence of the faith on the other.

Even the fact of the convert's unflinching faith and refusal to recant under the severest persecution has been twisted by Margoliouth to seek evidence for his theory. Thus, referring to the rule which was laid down much subsequently and which prescribed death penalty for an apostate he says that this was the "ordinary rule of the secret society" which was "avowed" so "soon as Islam became strong" and that the fact that many a convert remained faithful under persecution points to the existence of the rule since the early stage of Islam.[2] Clearly, Margoliouth's proposition here contradicts his assumption. He admits that the rule in question was made or announced subsequently when Islam became strong. He does not explain why a supposed rule characteristic of a secret society should have been announced or avowed by Islam when it admittedly was neither a secret group nor understandably in need of it. It may also be noted that the viability of such a rule with reference to any organization depends upon its inherent strength; and efficacy of the rule depends upon its enforceability; for conformity to it is induced only by a fear generated by examples of its enforcement. In the early stage of Islam it was admittedly very weak; so it could neither make such a rule nor think of enforcing it. There is also no instance whatsoever of the application or an attempt at application of the supposed rule during the whole of the Makkan period though, according to Margoliouth, several persons are stated to have abandoned Islam after having embraced it.[3]

Thus Margoliouth's theory of "Islam as a secret society" is ill-conceived,

1. *Al-'Iṣābah*, I, 71, no. 277.
2. Margoliouth, *op. cit.*, 114.
3. *Ibid.*, 89, 122.

ill-argued and untenable. As regards his views about revelation it has already been mentioned that he assumes that the Prophet feigned and practised seances to "produce" it and that its matter and contents were drawn from Jadaeo-Christian sources. The questions have already been dealt with, so they need not detain us here.[1] Margoliouth rightly observes, however, that from the very beginning the Prophet must have made a distinct departure from the prevailing ideas and practices of paganism and must have announced "some of the ordinances of Islam"; for, in Margoliouth's own words, "it is by no means sufficient to warn people of the terrors of the Day of Judgement; some answer must be given to the question, what shall I do to be saved? And that answer, in order that it may satisfy, must involve certain injunctions. There appear to have been commands to wash the clothes, and to avoid the idols".[2] Earlier Margoliouth states that "the distinctive features of Mohammed's teachings, as opposed to the ideas of paganism were from first to last the doctrine of a future life, and of the unity of God".[3]

1. *Supra*, ch. IX.
2. Margoliouth, *op, cit.*, 94. (The allusion is to Q. 74:4-5)
3. *Ibid.*, 88.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE BELL-WATT THEORY ABOUT THE CONTENTS OF EARLY REVELATIONS

Before making a survey of the early Muslims Watt deals with what he calls the "primary message". This he does in order to relate the teachings of the early Qur'ânic passages to the contemporary Makkan socio-economic situation and, on the basis of this "relevance to contemporary situation", to give a socio-economic interpretation of the rise of Islam in general and its acceptance by the early converts in particular. He differs sharply from Margoliouth who, as noted above, at least admits that from the very start the Prophet made a distinct departure from the prevailing ideas and practices of paganism and that the distinctive features of his teachings were, "from first to last the doctrine of future life, and that of the unity of God". Watt, however, would have us believe that the Prophet did neither make any distinct departure from pagan beliefs and practices nor did he clearly spell out monotheism. According to Watt, the Prophet at the beginning simply developed some vague ideas about monotheism but particularly stressed only the "goodnees" and "power" of God and man's duty of gratitude to Him. In advancing this theory Watt simply adopts and develops the view of his preceptor Bell who suggests that "to begin with" Muḥammad (ﷺ) did not "speak against the other gods but simply set forth the claims of Allah to gratitude".[1] The following is a summary of how Watt adopts and develops this view.

I. WATT'S IDENTIFICATION OF THE EARLY PASSAGES AND THEIR TEACHINGS

Watt divides his chapter on "The Primary Message"[2] into four sections. These are captioned respectively as "The Dating of the Qur'ân"[3], "The Contents of the Early Passages",[4] "The Relevance of the Message to the Contemporary Situation"[5] and "Further Reflections".[6] Excepting the first section

1. R. Bell, "The Beginning of Muḥammad's Religious Activity", *T.G.U.O.S.*, VII, 16-24, specially p. 20.

2. *M. at M.*, Chap. III, pp. 62-85.

3. *Ibid.*, 60-61.

4. *Ibid.*, 62-72.

5. *Ibid.*, 72-79.

6. *Ibid.* 79-85.

the other three sections are again divided into a number of sub-sections. These will be noticed as we proceed with our discussion.

In the first section, "The dating of the Qur'ân", Watt recalls the work of Theodore Nöldeke who, writing in the late nineteenth century, arranged the *sûrahs* in four periods, three Makkan and one Madinan, on the assumption that they were either earlier or later according as the *'âyahs* were shorter or longer. The "chief advance" upon that work, according to Watt, is that of Richard Bell. The latter, taking his cue from the fact that most *sûrahs* contain passages revealed at different times, split almost each and every *sûrah* into small passages according to his view of the unity and coherence of their themes and attempted to date them.[1] Watt bases his selection of the early passages on the conclusions of these two scholars saying that he has taken into account "those sûrahs or parts of sûrahs which are described both as 'first Meccan period'" by Nöldeke and as "'early' or 'early Meccan'" by Bell. Within this group, further states Watt, he has left aside those passages "where opposition to Muḥammad and the Qur'ân was expressed or implied", on the ground "that before opposition could arise some message which tended to arouse opposition must have been proclaimed".[2] The passages selected by him are:

96 (*sûrat al-'Alaq*): 1-8
74 (" *al-Muddaththir*): 1-10
106 (" *Quraysh*)
90 (" *al-Balad*): 1-11
93 (" *al-Ḍuḥâ*)
86 (" *al-Ṭâriq*): 1-10
80 (" *'Abasa*) 1-32
87 (" *al-'A'lâ*): 1-9; 14-15
84 (" *al-Inshiqâq*): 1-12
88 (" *al-Ghâshiyah*): 18-20
51 (" *al-Dhâriyât*): 1-6
52 (" *al-Ṭûr*): "some verses"
55 (" *al-Raḥmân*)

1. *Supra*, pp. 21-23 for a discussion on Bell's dating of the Qur'ân.
2. Watt, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

Thus having selected what he thinks to be the early passages of the Qur'ân Watt proceeds, in section II of his chapter, to discuss the contents of these early passages. In the sub-section (a) captioned *God's goodness and power*, Watt quotes in translation parts of a number of the above mentioned passages[1] and states that these emphasize God's goodness and power, particularly His creation and guidance of man, provision for his sustenance and the creation of the heavenly bodies, together with stressing "the transitoriness of the created existence and the permanence of the Creator".[2] He then makes two observations. He says that these passages show that the Qur'ân does not present the existence of God as something unknown, but assumes a vague belief in Him which it makes "more precise and vigorous" by stressing "that various common events are to be attributed to Him". Watt adds that this "tends to confirm the view that the conception of God had been seeping through to the Arabs from Judaeo-Christian monotheism".[3] Secondly, he says that though this emphasis on the power and goodness of God was a first step towards correcting the pagans' misconception of God as somewhat analogous to the other gods, "there is no mention of the unity of God", no stress "on this doctrine and no denunciation of idolatry". The purpose of the early passages, he asserts, was simply "to develop positively certain aspects of the vague belief in God", already existing among thoughtful Makkans, without highlighting the "contrast between this belief, with its tolerance of secondary gods, and a strict monotheism."[4]

In sub-section (b) Watt draws attention to another aspect of the message of the early passages, namely, their emphasis on the return to God for judgement and on the Day of Judgement. In substantiation of this point he refers specifically to 96:8; 74:8-10, 80:22; 86:4 and 84:12 which he quotes in translation.[5] A third aspect of the early message is dealt with in sub-section (c) which Watt captions *Man's response — gratitude and worship*. In this connection he refers to the expressions *ṭaghâ* (طغى) and *istaghnâ* (استغنى) which he interprets as "to be insolent" and "to act presumptuously" and

1. The passages translated are 96:1-5; 90:4, 8-10; 80:17-22; 87:1-3, 6-8; 55:1-3, 9-11, 20f.; 93:3-8; 106; 88:17-20.

2. Watt, *op. cit.*, pp. 62-63.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 63.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 64.

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 64-66.

observes that the Makkans, because of their financial strength, "felt themselves independent of any higher power" and lost their "sense of creatureliness".[1] The early passages aim at rectifying this attitude and emphasize gratitude. And since gratitude "finds expression in worship", there are several commands to worship in the early passages, such as 74:3 f.; 106 and 87:14 f. "Worship", concludes Watt, "was a distinctive feature of Muḥammad's community from the first" and opposition "was early directed against the performance of worship".[2]

Similarly in sub-section (d) Watt deals with what he considers the fourth aspect of the early message which he terms "generosity and purification". He connects generosity with purification by his interpretation of the expressions *tazakkâ / yatazakkâ* occurring in some of the early passages. Indeed he devotes his Excursus D[3] to this subject and, on the basis of his conclusions there says that *tazakkâ* in the early Makkan and early Madinan passages "is dependent on similar use of the root in Hebrew, Aramaic and Syriac" and that it thus means "the moral purity of which a vague idea had been formed in the Arab mind through Judaeo-Christian influence."[4] Therefore, he argues, the expression carries almost the same meaning as "righteousness or uprightness" and is used as "a comprehensive description of what is involved in the following of Muḥammad in the earliest period with special emphasis on the ethical side."[5] In his search for this ethical side Watt quotes in translation 90:11; 104:1-3; 92:5-11; 53:54; 100:6-11; 89:18-21; 68:17-33; 69:33-35; 51:17-19 and 70:17[6] and says that the "content of these passages amounts simply to this that it is good to feed the poor and destitute and bad to gather wealth for oneself."[7] Thus, in effect, Watt identifies *tazakkâ* with generosity and concludes that the "early Qur'ânic ethic is entirely confined to matters of generosity and niggardliness or miserliness..."[8]

Finally, in sub-section (e) Watt points out that another aspect of the early

1. *Ibid.*, pp. 66-67.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 67.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 165-169.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 68-69.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 69.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 69-70.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 70.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 71.

message is that it refers to Muḥammad's (ﷺ) special vocation as *nadhîr* and *mudhakkir*. He states that the word *'andhara* corresponds closely to the English 'warn' which means "informing a person of something of a dangerous, harmful, or fearful nature, so as to put him on his guard against it or put him in fear of it". It also implies that "the conception of judgement in some form must have been present from the beginning."[1] Thus, concludes Watt, in the early passages "the function of Muḥammad is confined to bringing to men's attention the matters mentioned in sub-sections (*a*) and (*b*) above", i.e., to "God's goodness and power" and "the return to God for judgement".[2]

II. EXAMINATION OF THE ASSUMPTIONS

(A) FAULTY SELECTION OF THE PASSAGES

Thus does Watt identify what he thinks the various aspects of the early message and the primary role of the Prophet. The early passages do of course speak about God's goodness and power, about the return to Him for judgement, about the Day of Judgement and about man's duty to be grateful and to perform worship. It is also true that the early revelations disapprove of gross materialism and selfishness and call for generosity and kindness. But it is not at all correct to say that there is "no mention of the unity of God", no emphasis on this doctrine and "no denunciation of idolatry". It is also not true that at the early stage the Prophet's role was confined to calling men's attention only to God's goodness and power and to be grateful and perform worship as an expression of gratitude. Watt makes these assertions by a faulty selection of the early passages, by faulty interpretations of them and by a series of faulty assumptions. Neither the facts, nor reason, nor even the tenor of his own arguments sustain his conclusions.

The obvious fault in his selection of the passages lies in the fact that the dating of Qur'ânic passages as made by Bell, on which Watt largely bases his statements, is not conclusive. As pointed out elsewhere,[3] not to speak of the Muslim scholars, even Western scholars do not universally accept Bell's dating. Watt himself entertains serious reservations about it saying, as he does here, that the results obtained by Bell, "though highly probable, are not altogether certain, since alternative views are often possible."[4] Neddless to

1. *Ibid.*
2. *Ibid.*, p. 72.
3. *Supra*, pp. 21-23.
4. Watt, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

point out, it is clearly hazardous to proceed on such uncertain grounds to make so unusual pronouncements on the contents of early Islamic revelations.

But Watt does not confine himself even to those passages that are regarded as early by both Nöldeke and Bell. Within this group, as he says, he leaves aside those that presuppose the growth of opposition because "before opposition could arise some message which tended to arouse opposition must have been proclaimed". This criterion is not at all a safe guide in the present case, for opposition and objections to the Prophet's claim to prophethood and to the message he delivered developed from the very beginning. This fact seems to have been recognized by both Nöldeke and Bell so that they did not adopt this criterion in determining the early passages. And Watt himself does not appear in practice to have adhered strictly to the principle he enunciates; and he is aware of it. For, after having named the passages he selects he says that it is conceivable that some of them "are to be dated after the first appearance of opposition, but since they are logically prior to it" he has disregarded this possibility.[1] It is not clear what he means by saying that they are conceivably posterior to the appearance of opposition "but logically prior to it". As will be shown presently, a number of passages which he has selected contain very clear indicatoins of the growth of opposition. Also, in his search for the "ethic" of the early message he in fact quotes a number of passages designated as early by both Nöldeke and Bell though they contain unmistakable indications of the growth of opoisition. These passages are: 104:1-3; 92:5-11; 68:17-33; 53:54 f.; 100:6-11; 89:18-21; 69:33-35; 51:17-19 and 70:17 f.[2] They are different from the list he gives at his p. 61 as early passages.

That opposition arose from the very beginning of the mission is in effect recognized also by Watt when he says that worship "was a distinctive feature of Muḥammad's community from the first" and opposition "was early directed against" its performance.[3] While saying this Watt ought to have pondered what the implications of the worship could have been that aroused opposition. As will be shown presently, he has not only failed to do so, but has either misunderstood or misinterpreted the commands to worship con-

1. Watt, *op. cit.*, p. 61.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 69-70.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 67.

tained in several of the early passages. In any case, by his own admission and practice Watt has not quite conformed to the criterion laid down by him and has selected some of the passages as early, though they presuppose the growth of opposition, because they seem to support his view, while he has left aside others of the same category understandably because they do not support what he intends to advance.

If this had not been done and if a little objective approach had been made it could have been seen that a number of the early passages do unequivocally enunciate monotheism and reject idolatry.[1] It should be recalled here that most scholars think that at least some 20 to 25 passages and *sûrahs* must have been revealed before the Prophet started preaching the message; and Watt himself quotes some 22 in his search for the primary message. If only his list is modified, and it ought to be modified, but keeping within the limit of 20 to 25 passages and *sûrahs*, one would get a very different picture. Thus *sûrah* 1 (*al-Fâtiḥah*), which is only the fifth in the order of revelation according to Muslim scholars and which is counted as 8th and 6th respectively by Rodwell and Muir, contain a very clear statement of monotheism. And although its last *'âyah* is sometimes supposed to have reference to some "unspecified sects", as Margoliouth puts it, the meaning would be clear and universal even if such implications are not assumed. Similarly the early part of *sûrah* 73 (*al-Muzzammil*), at least its first 9 or 10 *'âyahs*, which passage is traditionally counted as only the third in the order of revelation and which is regarded as 3rd, 20th and 23rd respectively by Rodwell, Jeffery and Nöldeke, states in its *'âyah* 9 that Allah is the "Lord of the East and the West, there is none worthy of worship except He. So take Him as Guardian." ﴿رب المشرق والمغرب لا إلـه الا هو فاتخذه وكيلا﴾. It is further to be noted that this particular passage does not contain any allusion whatsoever to the growth of opposition. Again *sûrah* 112 (*al-Ikhlâṣ*), which is counted by the Muslim scholars as the 22nd in the order of revelation but which is assigned the 10th and the 20th position respectively by Rodwell and Muir, is a classic statement on monotheism and an uncompromising rejection of idolatry. So is the case with *sûrah* 109 (*al-Kâfirûn*) which the Muslim scholars count as the 18th in the order of revelation but which is placed as the 12th by Rodwell.

Watt not only leaves aside such *sûrahs* and passages. Even of those *sûrahs* from which he selects some passages, he carefully excludes those

1. See *supra*, pp. 390-400.

very portions that strongly speak of monothesim, though they do not contain any indication of the growth of opposition. A glaring instance is his treatment of *sûrah* 51 (*al-Dhâriyât*) of which he takes *'âyahs* 1-6 but specifically excludes its *'âyah* 51 which states: "And do not set with Allah another *'ilâh* (object of worship); I am from Him a warner to you, clear and explicit." Watt's reason for excluding it from his list is that, according to Bell, "it is probably a later addition". And in support of this supposition and *probability* Watt further states that the *'âyah* "certainly sounds like the repetition of a point already made; had it been a fresh point it would have received greater emphasis."[1] Now, it must at once be pointed out that this *'âyah*, together with its five preceding ones, constitute a compact passage and it draws attention to what Watt calls God's goodness and power. Also it does not contain any indication of the growth of opposition. More importantly, it emphasizes the Prophet's role as *nadhîr* (warner) of which Watt is particularly cognizant, including an indication of the subject-matter of his warning. Thus by Watt's own criteria, as also Bell's, this passage ought to have been included in the list of early revelations. The only reason which appears to have induced Watt to exclude it from his list is the presence in it of a clear enunciation of monotheism. That the passage is a unit would be clear if it is quoted here. It runs as follows:

﴿والسمآء بنينـــها بأييد وإنا لموسعون * والأرض فرشنـــها فنعم المـــهدون * ومن كل شيء خلقنا زوجين لعلكم تذكرون * ففرّوٓا إلى الله إنى لكم منه نذير مبين * ولا تجعلوا مع الله إلـــها ءاخر إنى لكم منه نذير مبين﴾
(٥١ ٤٧:٥١)

"And the sky, We have made it with Hands and verily We are expanding (it).[2] And the earth We have spread it; and how excellently do We spread! And of everything We have made pairs, that you may receive instruction. Hence, flee to Allah; surely I am from Him a warner to you, clear and explicit. And do not set with Allah another *'ilâh* (object of worship); certainly I am from Him a warner to you, clear and explicit." (51:47-51)

Nothing could be a more emphatic and explicit enunciation of the doctrine of monotheism and an exhortation to the audience to "flee" to Allah from what they were on. Also, nothing could be a greater emphasis on the Prophet's role as warner and a clearer exposition of what he was warning against. It is therefore strange that Watt resorts to the argument that "had it

1. *Ibid*., p. 64.
2. See *supra* pp. 309-310 for the significance of this expression.

been a fresh point it would have received greater emphasis." It is not conceivable what greater emphasis could have been there on the subject! But since Watt counts the first six *'âyahs* of the *sûrah* as among the very early passages to be revealed, and since he also regards its 51st *'âyah* as a "later addition" but nonetheless a repetition of a point already made, it would have been only logical on his part if he had pursued the question in an attempt to identify the passages that were earlier than this one and that first made the point of which 51:51 is said to be a "repetition". Watt does not, however, do anything of that sort.

Equally subjective and arbitrary is his treatment of *sûrah* 52 (*al-Ṭûr*). He does not at first specify any *'âyah* or passage from it but simply points out that "some verses" of it are early. Later on in his sub-section (b) dealing with "the return to God for judgement" he cites and quotes *'âyahs* 7 and 8 of the *sûrah* which, as he notes, emphasize "the reality and certainty" of judgement and punishment.[1] The two *'âyahs* run as follows:﴿إن عذاب ربك لواقع * ما له من دافع﴾ "Verily the punishment of your Lord is sure to come to pass; there is none who can avert it". The initial six *'âyahs* of the sûrah are "oaths" emphasizing this statement. It may be noted that the first six *'âyahs* of the previous *sûrah* (51 *al-Dhâriyât*) which Watt includes in his list and which also he quotes in this sub-section speak about the same thing. The first four *'âyahs* are "oaths" emphasizing what follows in *'âyahs* 5-6 which state: "Verily what you have been promised (i.e., warned about) is true. The Judgement is sure to come to pass"﴿إنما توعدون لصادق * وإن الدين لواقع﴾

Now it is simply inconceivable that either these six (in effect 2)[2] *'âyahs* or the two *'âyahs* of *sûrah* 52 (*al-Ṭûr*) should have been revealed completely divorced from a mention of the duty for which an account is certainly to be rendered and failure in which would inevitably entail punishment. The point at issue was not "God's goodness and power" but very much God's *godness* (*'ulûhiyah*) and His claim to man's absolute and undivided allegiance. It is this more fundamental and serious issue which forms the main theme of *sûrah* 51, as shown above, as also of *sûrah* 52. In both attention is called to the inevitability and certainty of judgement and punishment by way of bringing home this theme. It is in this strain that *'âyah* 43 of the *sûrah* 52 throws out the question: "Or, is there an *'ilâh* for them other than Allah? Exalted

1. *Ibid.*, pp. 65-66.
2. The frist 4 *'âyahs* are only oalths.

and Holy is He from what they set as partners (for Him)."[1] The *sûrah* ends with an exhortation to worship Him (Alone).[2] There is thus a unity in the *sûrah* as a whole and the dominating theme in it is the absolute Unity of God and His claim to man's undivided allegiance. The warning about judgement and punishment is an inseparable appertinent to this main theme. It would be simply arbitrary and unnatural to divorce this warning from the fundamental issue and treat it as separate from or posterior to the former. In carrying out such unnatural dissection Watt indeed appears to have been aware of the weakness of his position. For, towards the end of his sub-section he remarks that "the verses just discussed, 51.5f. and 52.7f.,...seem to belong rather to the transition to the second stage when opposition was appearing, and doubts about the reality of judgement had been expressed."[3] The remark is yet another recognition of the fact that opposition and objection to the Prophet's mission started right from the beginning. It is also an admission of the untenability of the criterion that passages are earlier or later according as they do not or do conatin indication of the growth of opposition. The confusion and compromises made by Watt could easliy have been averted if the *'âyahs* dealing with judgement and punishment were not arbitrarily isolated from the fundamental issue of the Unity of God which is the subject-matter of the warning and which is very much mentioned along with it but to which Watt (or rather his mentor Bell) assigns a later date.

(B) MISTAKEN INTERPRETATION OF THE PASSAGES

Leaving aside the passages and *sûrahs* which Watt does not take into account, even the passages which he himself selects contain unmistakable references to *tawḥîd* or absolute Unity of God and rejection of idolatry. He either fails to grasp their implications or misinterprets them in order to bring them in line with his assumption. A glaring instance of such avoidance or misinterpretation is his treatment of 74:3 (*al-Muddaththir*). He does not produce its translation in his sub-section on "God's goodness and power" but does so in sub-section (c) — "Gratitude and worship" — where he translates it as "Thy Lord magnify" and says that it is a command to worship.[4] And

1. 52:4 = ﴿أم لهم إلـه غير الله سبحـن الله عما يشركون﴾

2. 52:49 = ﴿ومن اليل فسبحه وإدبـر النجوم﴾ "And for part of the night, sing His Holiness and Sacredness, and at retreat of the stars (i.e. at dawn)". (52:49).

3. Watt, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 67.

then, in sub-section (e) — "Muḥammad's own vocation" — he produces the translation again and says that it refers to the Prophet's vocation as *nadhîr* (warner).[1] In fact, the *'âyah* is not a command to worship but is directly related to the previous *'âyah* which commands the Prophet to "Rise and warn"(قم فانذر). While recognizing the connection between the two *'âyahs* Watt states somewhat confusingly that the latter *'âyah* is one of the "other passages" indicating the Prophet's "unique and special vocation." It must be noted that it is not another passage but simply the previous *'âyah* to "Thy Lord magnify". Indeed, as pointed out earlier,[2] all the commands in the passage 74:1-7 following the command at the second *'âyah* are related to it and are in elucidation of what the Prophet was to warn about. What then is the meaning of the command *kabbir*, "magnify"? And in relation to what was this magnification to be done? If it means simply to proclaim God's greatness or goodness it ceases to have any relevance to the act of warning. Hence, with reference to this context and keeping in view the import of the command, the expression *kabbir* must be taken to mean the proclamation of the special and absolute greatness of "Your Lord" over and above all other beings and over and above all conceptual inadeqacies, so that indifference to or disregard of such special greatness calls for warning. It is this sense which the command *kabbir* carries here and in which it was understood by those to whom it was addressed. The command in this particular form, *kabbir*, occurs at only one other place in the Qur'ân where the context makes its meaning very clear. It occurs in 17:111 (*sûrat al-'Isrâ'*) which runs as follows:

﴿وقل الحمد لله الذى لم يتخذ ولدا ولم يكن له شريك فى الملك ولم يكن له ولى من الذلّ وكبره تكبيرا﴾

"And say, 'Praise be to Allah Who has not taken to Himself a son, nor is there an associate with Him in the dominion (*'ulûhiyah*); nor is there any helper for Him on account of any weaknes; 'and (thus) proclaim His greatness, a true proclmation."

The first part of the *'âyah* is a definition of the act of *takbîr*, i.e., proclaiming Allah's greatness and it is in that sense the command *kabbir* has been made and understood since the very beginning of the revelation. And in the Islamic parlance *takbîr* has ever since meant: say *Allah Akbar*, Allah is the *Greatest*.

The matter becomes clearer in connection with the fourth command in the passage, i.e., 74:5, ﴿والرّجز فاهجر﴾ "And the abomination, shun." All the recognized authorities on the Arabic language and Qur'ânic exegesis take

1. *Ibid.*, p. 71.
2. *Supra*, pp. 395-396.

rujz to mean the worship of idols and interpret the *'âyah* as a command to avoid the worship of idols, which is considered filth, dirt and uncleanliness.[1] As Fakhr al-Dîn al-Râzî points out, *al-rujz* is equivalent in meaning to *al-rijs* (الرجس); and worship of idols is described elsewhere in the Qur'ân as *rijs*, as in 22:30.[2] The command implies perseverence and continuity in the act of avoiding, not simply avoiding in the first instance, as Fakhr al-Dîn al-Râzî points out.

Although the command is thus directly related to the command "Rise and warn" and occurs in the same passage Watt takes 74:5 out of this context and discusses it under his subsection (b) — "the return to God for judgement." Following Bell he says that the word *rujz* is derived from the Syriac *rugza* meaning 'wrath' and thinks that the word "presumably originally had an eschatological connotation."[3] The question of the origin of the word apart, the meaning 'wrath' here would be simply out of context and misfit, whatever eschatological connotation is presumed for it. It would beg the further question: 'wrath' of whom, and for what? If it is taken to mean God's wrath, and nothing else would at all be appropriate, then it ought to be related to the command preceding it, namely, the duty to proclaim God's "greatness", failure in which duty would justly occasion His 'wrath'.

Before leaving this passage (74:1-10) it should be noted that there are at least two allusions in it to the growth of opposition to the message. The first is the *'âyah* 74:7 "And for (the sake of) thy Lord be patient" ﴿ولربك فاصبر﴾. The Prophet is plainly told that in the discharge of his duty as *nadhîr* he has to be patient. Clearly a hard time for him had either already set in or was about to ensue in consequence of his preaching. Similarly 74:10, which says that the Day of Judgement will be far from easy for the *kâfirîn*, shows that some persons had already proved themselves *kâfirs* or rejecters of the message. Watt appears to avoid this significance of the *'âyah*; for though he translates the word *kâfirîn* as "unbelievers" in his sub-section (b),[4] in his sub-section (c) on "gratitude and worship" he says, on the analogy of the expression *mâ-'akfarahu* in 80:17 that 74:10 which says that the Day of

1. See for instance Al-Ṭabarî, *Tafsîr*, 29/93; Fakhr al-Dîn al-Râzî, *Al-Tafsîr al-Kabîr*, 30/193.

2. *Ibid*. The *'âyah* runs as follows: ﴿فاجتنبوا الرّجس من الأوثان...﴾ See also 5:93; 9:95; 9:125.

3. *Watt, op. cit*., p. 64.

4. *Ibid*.

Judgement will be difficult for the *kâfirin*, "probably meant for its first audience that it would be difficult 'for the ungrateful'."[1] It should at once be pointed out that the same word bears different meanings in different contexts. The plain meaning of the word *kâfir* is a rejecter of the message, hence unbeliever. This is the most natural meaning of the term in 74:10, as Watt himself first translates it. So there is no need to try to show that "for its first audience" it probably meant "the ungrateful". The problem is that Watt either fails to understand or avoids the correct significance of what he calls statements relating to God's goodness and the duty to be grateful and to worship, as will be explained presently. Hence he gives one meaning to an expression at one place, and quite another meaning to the same expression at another place. The primary meaning of *kâfir* is evident from 43:24, ﴿قالوا إنا بما أرسلتم به كـفرون ...﴾ : "They said, we are indeed rejecters of what you have been sent with." Be that as it may, even if the meaning "ungrateful" is assumed for the word in 74:10, that would nonetheless imply some kind of rejection of the message, and therefore growth of opposition.

The doctrine of strict monotheism is equally emphatically asserted in another of Watt's passages, i.e., 87:1, ﴿سبح اسم ربك الأعلى﴾ . To translate it as "Glorify the name of your Lord, the Most High" would be both poor and inaccurate. The primary meaning of the expression *sabbiḥ* (سبّح) is *nazzih* (نزّه), that is, to declare or render someone holy, sacred, immune from and beyond any blemish and shortcoming.[2] The *'âyah* is thus a direct command to declare the holiness, sublimity and transcendence of "Your Lord, the Most High", from all kinds of erroneous assumptions and ascriptions, such as His having partners or being co-eval with any other entity, as was believed and asserted by the commonalty of the Makkans and Arabs of the time. The directive was made, and has to be understood, in the context of the prevailing situation and notion. As one of the most respected authorities on the Arabic language and Qur'ânic lexicography points out, the expressions *sabbiḥ* (سبح) and *subḥân* (سبحـن) have been used in the Qur'ân in relation to Allah in at least seven shades of meaning, all having in view His attributes, positively or negatively.[3] Negatively they denote His absolute holiness and immunity from all kinds of weaknesses and drawbacks, particularly His

1. *Ibid.*, p. 66.
2. See *Tâj al-'Arûs*, II, p. 156.
3. Majd al-Dîn Muḥammad Ya'qûb al-Fîrûzâbâdî, *Baṣâ'ir Dhawî al-Tam'yîz Fî Laṭâ'if al-Kitâb al-'Azîz*, Vol. III, second Egyptian edn., 1968,pp.172-178.

being free from and independent of any associate. This is very clear from the instances where the expression *subḥân* (سبحـٰن) has been used in connection with Allah. Some of these self-explanatory instances are as follows:

1. 52:43 = ﴿أم لهم إلـٰـه غير الله سبحـٰـن الله عمّا يشركون﴾

2. 59:23 = ﴿هو الله الذى لا الـٰـه الا هو ... سبحـٰـن الله عمّا يشركون﴾

3. 39:04 = ﴿سبحـٰـنه هو الله الوٰحد القهّار﴾

4. 28:68 = ﴿.... سبحـٰـن الله وتعـٰـلىٰ عمّا يشركون﴾

6-9. 39:67; 30:40; 16:1 and 10:8 ﴿... سبحـٰـنه وتعـٰـلىٰ عمّا يشركون﴾

10. 9:31 = ﴿... لا الـٰـه إلا هو سبحـٰـنه عمّا يشركون﴾[1]

It may also be noted that the expression *al-'A'lâ* (الأعلىٰ), The Most High, has the same implication of *tawḥîd*, for Allah is to be regarded as High and Above all others. The derivative *ta'âlâ* (تعالى) is used in that very sense in the instances 4-9 quoted above. A few more instances are provided by 27:63; 23:96; 16:3 and 7:190. The first one reads: ﴿ أإلـٰـه مع الله تعـٰـلىٰ الله عمّا يشركون ﴾ "Can there be an *'ilâh* along with Allah? He transcends far above what they set as partners." It should thus be clear that the combination of the command *sabbiḥ* with the description of "Your Lord" as "The Most High" (الأعلىٰ) is an unmistakable enunciation of strict monotheism.

The same sense of *tawḥîd* is conveyed also by the expressions *tazakkâ / yazzakâ*. Drawing chiefly on Jeffery's *Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'ân* Watt attempts to assign a Syriac / Hebrew / Aramaic origin to the expression and suggests that it was used in Arabic in the sense of righteousness or uprightness. Further, referring to the various uses of the term in the Qur'ân he suggests that in the Madinan period it underwent a change of meaning. He then draws attention to what he considers the only ethic in the early passages of the Qur'ân and says that at the early stage *yazzakâ* meant attaining righteousness or uprightness by conforming to that ethic, namely, practising generosity. The round-aboutness of the argument apart, with regard to all these assumptions it needs only to be recalled what has been stated earlier[2] that even a word of foreign origin, when naturalized in another country or society often assumes a meaning or meanings quite different from the meaning of the root-word in the original language. Also, a particular word in any particular language is often used in various senses depending on the con-

1. See also Q. 12:108; 6:100; 4:171; 25:18; 34:41; 37:180.
2. *Supra*, pp. 425-426.

texts. Hence it does not necessarily follow that the use of the expression *tazakkâ* in a Madinan passage in a sense different from that in a Makkan *sûrah* means that the implication of the term underwent a change. Nothing illustrates this point better than the use of the expression *yazzakkâ* in 80:3 and 80:7, both of which are recognized by Watt as having been revealed at the same time. The Prophet is mildly rebuked in this passage for having turned his attention away from an humble and blind man (Ibn Umm Maktûm) although he might *yazzakâ*, and having instead paid special attention to a rich Makkan, who considered himself self-sufficient (*istaghnâ* استغنى), though it would be no fault of the Prophet if that rich man did not *yazzakâ*. Now, it is obvious that though *yazzakkâ* in the case of the rich and proud man might mean attaining uprightness by practising generosity, that would not at all apply to the poor and blind fellow who did not have to attain that sort of righteousness. The fact is that in many places in the Qur'ân the expressions *yazzakkâ* and *yatazakkâ* have been used in the sense of purifying one's self from the filth of idolatry and polytheism and thus paving the way for the health and growth of one's soul. In other words, *yazzakkâ* means, as definitely in 80:3, accepting *tawḥîd*.[1] It is for this reason that one of the authorities on Qur'ânic exegesis, Ibn Zayd, states, as Watt recognizes,[2] that *al-tazakkî* throughout the Qur'ân means Islam.[3] Watt sets out to contradict that general sense of the expression in the early passages and is in turn only involved in a round-about and labyrinthian argumentation. For one thing, neither the poor and blind man, nor the proud and rich Makkan did come to the Prophet to take a lesson on the ethic of generosity.

Indeed, what Watt identifies as simply illustrative of God's goodness and as emphasis on "the return to God for judgement" are all intended to bring home the doctrine of the Unity of God (*tawḥîd*). Also the "vocation" of the Prophet as *nadhîr* or warner is emphasized for the same purpose. As Watt recognizes, the act of warning means "informing a person of something of a dangerous, harmful, or fearful nature, so as to put him on his guard against it or put him in fear of it." It was against the fearful consequences of rejecting *tawḥîd* and indulging in polytheism against which the Prophet warned, and not simply against the offence of being ungrateful to or unmindful of God's

1. See Fîrûz'âbâdî, *op. cit.*, p. 135. Fîrûz'âbâdî identifies 16 different shades of meaning for the word (*ibid.*, pp.134-135).

2. Watt, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

3. Al-Ṭabarî, *Tafsîr*, on 79:18.

goodness. Similarly the emphasis on the inevitability and certainty of judgement and punishment is intended to bring home the same theme of monotheism. Thus what Watt calls the distinct aspects of the early message are really intimately and inseparably connected with the central theme of monotheism. Even the emphasis on the worship of God, which Watt presents as only a requisite for the duty of gratitude, is only a practical demonstration of the doctrine of *tawḥîd*. It may be recalled here that the concept of *tawḥîd* has three facets, two of them being *tawḥîd al-rubûbiyyah* and *tawḥîd al-'ulûhiyyah*. *Tawḥîd al-rububiyyah* or recognition of God as the Creator and supreme Lord in all afairs was vaguely known to the Arabs, not because it sceped through Judaeo-Christian sources, as Watt would have us believe, but because these faiths and many of the beliefs of the Arabs had their origin in the divine message delivered by Prophet Ibrâhîm but subsequently confused. The confusion occurred mainly in respect of *tawḥîd al-'ulûhiyyah*, i.e., God as the One Only object of worship. It was lost sight of by the then Arabs, "pagans" and "Chirstians" alike. Watt appears to have failed to grasp this aspect of the matter. Hence he has made rather inconsistent statements about the subject. Thus he first says that the Qur'ân assumes "a vague belief in God, and makes this more precise," etc.,[1] and then, a little later, remarks that the Qur'ân "ostensibly makes a fresh start" but in fact only acts "as a centre of integration" for the vague and nebulous tendencies towards monotheism as typified by the search for *ḥanîfiyyah*;[2] and finally, in a recent work, states: "Since writing *Muhammad at Mecca* I have also become more fully aware of the presence in Mecca of many persons who believed in Allah as a high or supreme deity to whom other deities might make intercession, and I now regard this as a factor of primary importance."[3] This fact ought to have been clear to any careful reader of the Qur'ân and of the writings of any recognized Muslim scholar like Al-Mas'ûdî or ibn Taymiyyah. It has long been recognized also by many of Watt's predecessors like Sale and Hitti.[4] Be

1. Watt, *op. cit.*, p. 63.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 96.
3. Watt, *Muḥammad's Mecca*, Edinburgh University Press,1988, preface, vii.
4. Hitti, for instance writes: "Allah (*allâh*, *al-ilâh*, the god) was the principal, though not the only, deity of Makkah. The name is an ancient one. It occurs in two South Arabic inscriptions.... The name of Muḥammad's father was 'Abd-Allah ('Abdullah, the slave or worshipper of Allah). The esteem in which Allah was held by the pre-Islamic Makkans as the creator and supreme provider and the one to be invoked in time of special peril may be inferred from such koranic passages as 31:24,31; 6:137,109; 10:23". -P.K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, (first published 1937), 10th edition, reprinted 1986, pp. 100-101.

that as it may, it is good that Watt has at last been more fully aware of this fact, which is of course of "primary importance." But what he does not fully recognize is that the Prophet was quite aware of this fact relating to his own society and time. Therefore, his first and primary aim could not have been but to dispel the mistake and misconception in which the commonalty of his people had been involved. Thus, when the Quraysh were called upon to "worship[1] the Lord of this House", they were in fact exhorted to give up the worship of the imaginary gods and goddesses whom they had set up as *'âlihah* (plural of *'ilâh*), i.e., as objects of worship. It was for that very reason that worship of Allah alone was insisted upon from the very beginning and was, as Watt recognizes, "a distinctive feature of Muḥammad's community from the first." And it was precisely for this implication of the new type of worship that opposition "was early directed against" it; for worship of Allah as the only and sole *'ilâh* meant the open and unequivocal abandonment of the other imaginary *'ilâhs* of whom the Quraysh leaders were the devotees and acknowledged guardian-priests. That is also why the first formula of Islamic belief has been from the very beginning *Lâ'ilâh illâ Allah* (No*'ilâh* except Allah), not *Lâ rabb illâ Allah*; for recognition of Allah's *ulûhiyyah* involves the recognition of his *rubûbiyyah*, not *vice versa*.

This brings us to Watt's main thesis that the early message simply developed "positively certain aspects of the vague belief in God"[2] and that it otherwise acted "as a centre of integration" for *the vague and nebulous* tendencies exhibited by the *ḥanîfs*.[3] This recognition of the existence of a vague belief in God and of the trend towrds the search for *ḥanîfiyyah* in fact constitutes the strongest objection to Watt's assumption. For, under the circumstances, neither the Prophet could have embarked upon a new mission nor could anyone have paid any heed to him unless the message he initially delivered was easily recognized to be a marked advance upon the vague beliefs and tendencies. Particularly the *ḥanîfs* and other individuals with similar tendencies, a number of whom by Watt's admission accepted the Prophet's message and followed him in the very initial phase, would not have done so if they had not found something new and better in it. It is worth remembering in this connection that many of the *ḥanîfs* had not only openly abandoned the worship of idols and inveighed against them, but had also been in the

1. Not "serve", as Watt translates the word here — Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, p. 67.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 64.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 96.

habit of not partaking of any meat or food dedicated to them. And we have the statement of at least one such person, 'Amr ibn 'Abasah who, hearing about the Prophet, came to him at the very initial stage of his mission and directly asked him what he meant by his being a *nabî* (Prophet). He explained that God had chosen him to preach, among other things, the Unity of God and to ask people not to associate anyone with Him. The reply convinced 'Amr of the truth of the mission and he believed.[1] It must be emphasized that it is a statement by one of the actors in the drama and he had no reason subsequently to embellish the reason for his believing. The story is only illustrative of what in the nature of things must have happened with regard to many of the others who had already imbibed the spirit of *ḥanîfiyyah* or tendency towards monotheism. None would have gathered round the Prophet if he had initially only confined himself to the subtle intellectual exercise of gradually developing "positively" what is called the ideas of God's goodness and power. That simple concept of God's goodness and power was no new thing, neither to the pagans, nor , more emphatically, to the "thoughtful Meccans", the *ḥanîfs* and their sort. Watt simply labours unsuccessfully to present his peculiar view in order to connect it, as will be seen presently, with the questionable story of the "Satanic verses" and his theory about the growth of opposition.[2] Before turning our attention to that question, however, it remains to see what he has to say on the relevance of the early message to the contemporary situation.

III. ON RELEVANCE TO THE CONTEMPORARY SITUATION

Since the beginning of modern writings on the Prophet there has scarcely been an author who has not attempted in some form or other to relate the emergence of the Prophet and the rise of Islam generally to the socio-economic and political circumstances of the time. For instance Hitti, after reviewing the social, political and religious situation in Arabia observes: "The stage was set, the moment was psychological, for the rise of a great religious and national leader."[3] Watt's paying attention to this question of relevance to the contemporary situation is thus no new approach. He is distinguished from his predecessors, however, in two principal respects. In the first place, he disavows, more emphatically than anyone else, any intention to explain the rise of Islam in purely secularist terms; yet, in effect, he only

1. *Musnad*, IV, 111, 112; Ibn Sa'd, IV, 214-219.
2. See *infra*, chaps. XXIX & XXXI.
3. Hitti, *op. cit.*, 108.

does so. Secondly, he speculates on a particular form of the contemporary situation and then twists the facts to fit them in with that situation.

It must be pointed out at the very outset that the Qur'ânic message, both early and later, has of course relevance to the prevailing situation. This relevance is both particular and general or universal. It has in its immediate view the particular socio-religious and moral situation in Arabia of the time; but it is equally applicable and relevant to any time and place, whenever or wherever there is error and misguidance, idolatry and polytheism, social injustice and disregard of human values and rights, and loss of a sense of purpose in life or total engrossment in worldly life. In fact to deny the relevance of the message to a given situation would be to deny its very purpose and need. Within this broad sphere of relevance, however, one should be careful to draw inferences and conclusions about it. And it is precisely such inferences and assumptions of the orientalists on the matter, particularly of Watt, that call for close examination.

Watt deals with the subject in sections 3 and 4 of his chapter III, more particularly in section 3.[1] He deduces what he calls the "diagnosis of the contemporary malaise" from the 'remedy' suggested in the early passages of the Qur'ân. Hence he proceeds to consider "the diagnosis and the remedy at the same time" under four sub-sections — social, moral, intellectual and religious. The central theme in all these sub-sections is his assumption that the mercantile life in Makka had fostered individualism resulting in a "weakening of social solidarity". Similarly his general conclusion throughout these sub-sections is that the Qur'ânic teachings were adapted to this situation and that those teachings were also largely based on the pre-Islamic nomadic values and concepts.

In his first sub-section Watt discusses the *social* situation. He points out that the Qur'ân shows that the amassing of large fortunes had been the preoccupation of many Makkans which, he says, was a sign of individualism. The Qur'ân also shows that orphans were ill-treated, "presumably by their relatives who acted as guardians." All these led to a widening of the gap between the rich and the poor, or rather "between rich, not-so-rich and poor", and to a weakening of social solidarity and loss of the sense of community and security "which came from clan and family relationships."[2] Thus

1. Watt, *op. cit.*, pp. 72-79.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 72-73.

identifying the social malaise Watt relates the teachings of the early passages to the situation in three ways. As regards the question of social solidarity he says that the early passages of the Qur'ân have "no more than a premonition of the real remedy for this situation, namely, that a new basis for social solidarity is to be found in relgion.[1] As regards the gap between the rich and not-so-rich etc., it is said that the insistence on generosity and on the principle that man is given wealth partly in trust for the community (70:24) might lead to some alleviation of the troubles. As regards individualism Watt says that there "was no possibility of return to the old tribal solidarity. Man's consciousness of himself as an individual had come to saty". Hence the Qur'ân accepts this fact "in the conception of the Last Judgement, for that is essentially a judgement on individuals."[2]

What Watt says here and in the remaining part of his chapter III is yet another aspect of his economic interpretation of the rise of Islam. Indeed a little later he clearly states that what he has suggested is "that the rise of Islam is somehow connected with the change from a nomadic to a mercantile economy."[3] In this statement and in his suggestion generally Watt either overdraws or oversimplifies. It is just not correct that the Makkan economy on the eve of the rise of Islam and for half a century or more prior to it marked a transition from nomadic to mercantile economy. On the contrary, since the very beginning of Makkan history, indeed since the time of the settlement of the Quraysh at Makka, it presents the spectacle of a mercantile economy, however poor or prosperous. Throughout the preceding centuries the Quraysh had continued to survive or thrive as a mercantile community. It is therefore a grossly misleading or mistaken statement that the rise of Islam coincided with or was attendant upon the transition from a nomadic to a mercantile economy.

Proceeding on the basis of this fundamental misconception Watt makes three further assumptions. (i) He says that there was a concentration of wealth in a few hands which widened the gap between the "rich, not-so-rich and the poor". (ii) This concentration of wealth was both an effect as well as a cause of the growth of individualism. (iii) These cause and effect, i.e. concentration of wealth in a few hands and the growth of inidvidualism led to a

1. *Ibid.*, p. 73.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*, p. 79. The idea is really not Watt's, but Bell's and C.C. Torrey's.

weakening of social solidarity and a loss of the sense of community which came from clan and family relationships. In all these assumptions Watt is largely mistaken.

As regards the first assumption, namely, that there was a spate of commercial activities in Makka just on the eve of the rise of Islam and consequently an unusual concentration of wealth in a few hands, a recent writer has very convincingly shown that the thesis is not tenable. She further points out that Watt appears to have simply taken over the conclusions of Henry Lammenms, "a notoriously unreliable scholar."[1] There were of course a group of rich and obstinate leaders in Makka; but the emergence of such a group was no sudden or recent development. As Watt himself recognizes, wealth and influence in Makka had alternated between different groups and clans since the very beginning of its history. And since the phenomenon was no new or sudden development, it is equally wrong to assume that that phenomenon led to a widening of the gap between "the rich, not-so-rich and poor."

In fact the last expression is somewhat confusing. It rather betrays the speciousness of Watt's assumption; for when we say "rich, not-so-rich and poor", it is evident that the gap between the groups identified is neither wide nor unusually remarkable. Watt's adoption of this expression appears to be a compromise between his two mutually exclusive attitudes. He intends to give a sort of pseudo-socialistic and economic interpretation of the rise of Islam; at the same time he would not agree with those who say that Islam represented a sort of socialistic reform movement. It also shows his awareness of the disagreement between his assumption and the facts; for he recognizes, as noted earlier, that most of those who initially joined the Islamic movement did not belong to the "poor" group but to the "rich" and "not-so-rich" groups. He also admits that whatever might be the nature of the gap between the first two groups, in accepting Islam the early converts were not at all actuated by such economic and social considerations.[2] Nor, it should be emphasized, was the Qur'ânic exhortation to generosity intended primarily to bridge the gap between the "rich, not-so-rich and poor".

Similarly misleading is the emphasis placed on the supposed growth of individualism which is stated to be both the cause and effect of mercantil-

1. Patricia Crone, *Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam*, Oxford, 1987, p. 3.
2. *Infra*, pp. 601-602.

ism. A fair degree of individualism and personal independence had been in existence, within the framework of the tribal and clan system, since time immemorial. Individuals very much owned and bequeathed property and pursued the trade or profession of their own choice. As Watt himself recognizes, tribal honour, which was an expression of the ideal of *murû'ah*, often ment honour of the individual member of the tribe and the "nomadic outlook also had a high opinion of human power."[1] As in the past, so also on the eve of the rise of Islam, "financial and material interests were the basis of partnerships as often as blood relationship"; but this was so *not* in disregard nor in substitution of the latter. On the contrary, the interest of an individual, if he was strong enough, was often taken up by his tribe as their own cause. The case of those who supported Al-'Âṣ ibn Wâ'il and did not join the *ḥilf al-fuḍûl* is an instance in point. But beyond that, no further development of individulaism is discernible in the Makkan society on the eve of the rise of Islam.

The Qur'ân insisted on the accountability of each individual before God not because "man's consciousness of himself as an individual had come to stay, and therefore had to be taken into account", nor because there "was no possibility of return to the old tribal solidarity", as Watt would have us believe.[2] It did so just for the reverse reason — because man had forgotten the principle of personal and individual responsibility to God and because the notion prevailed that a person's belonging to a particular racial stock or tribe entitled him to preferential treatment in the sight of God, or that someone had atoned for his sins or that he had influential leaders, gods and demigods to intercede for him before God. The Qur'ân emphasized the principle of personal and individual responsibility for each and every one, not excluding the Prophets themselves, just to combat the above mentioned wrong notions. And in so far as it did it, the Qur'ân introduced true individualism in human affairs and struck at the root of that prevailing tribal notion which regarded it as *honour* to defend and take up the cause of any of its members irrespective of the merit of his action. In his attempt to deduce the "malady" from the "remedy" Watt simply puts here the case in just the reverse order.

Nor is the assumption at all correct that the supposed growth of individualism had undermined tribal and clan solidarity to such an extent

1. Watt, *op. cit.*, pp. 74, 76.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 73.

that there was a loss of the sense of "security which came from clan and family relationships." Such was not at all the case. Clan and family solidarity was as strong and effective on the eve of the rise of Islam as it ever had been. Throughout the pre-*hijrah* period the Prophet himself was protected by this traditional system of clan solidarity. There is no evidence at all that those who embraced Islam did so because of their desire to find an alternative basis for social solidarity. On the contrary, when the first batch of the emigrants to Abyssinia returned to Makka[1] each of them sought and procured the traditional pattern of personal security before entering Makka. The assumption of a loss of the sense of tribal and clan security on the eve of the rise of Islam is a figment of Watt's imagination which he only betrays when he says that the "early passages of the Qur'ân have no more than a premonition of the real remedy for the situation, namely, that a new basis for social security is to be found in religion."[2] It is only to be added that the early pssages do not even contain a "premonition of the remedy", because there was no such "malady" as is assumed by Watt. Islam did of course ultimately provide a new basis for social solidarity, but that was clearly a very subsequent development, and when that was done, the reason was not the breakdown of the traditional pattern of social security but because of the emergence of a new situation consequent upon the success of Islam. As with regard to the previous point, here also Watt seems to have been eloped into the error by his policy of deducing the "malady" from the "remedy"; and here again he puts as fact what is just its reverse.

In his second sub-section Watt deals with the moral situation. Here also he presses more or less the same assumption of the effect of mercantilism, but from a different angle. He says that the old nomadic ideal of *murû'ah*, particularly in its aspect of "protection of the weak and defiance of the strong" had been quietly abandoned in Makka because "succcess in commerce and finance is linked up with disregard for the weak and cultivation of the friendship of the strong" and because the financier always tries "to increase his fortune". Also the sanction of the ideal lay in public opinion, but "with the growth of large fortunes at Mecca public opinion apparently ceased to count for much there." At the same time the need for charity in a city like Makka was just as great as in the desert.[3]

1. *Infra*, pp. 672-673.
2. Watt, *op. cit.*, p. 73.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 74-75.

Watt then argues that the acts of generosity were regarded as virtuous by the nomadic Arabs. In insisting on such acts the Qur'ân was thus not only "reviving one side of the old Arab ideal" but also providing for it a new sanction, that of "eschatological reward and punishment". The early passages of the Qur'ân provided "a source or channel for the creation of the new morality, namely, the revealed commands of God and the Prophet through whom they are revealed... The fact that the moral ideal is commanded by God is an additional sanction."[1]

What Watt says here about the abandonment of the ideal by the rich and proud Makkan leaders is perhaps true; but its generalization and application to the majority sections of the Makkan population of the time would be undoubtedly inappropriate. In saying, however, that the early passages of the Qur'ân provided a "moral" and a "sanction" for this old ideal in "eschatological reward and punishment" and in "the revealed commands of God and the Prophet through whom they are revealed", Watt strikes at the basic issue, though he does not openly recognize it. "Eschatological reward or punishment" and "revealed commands of God" could be a 'sanction' only if God's supremacy over all other forces and entites was first recognized and also if it was recognized that He was revealing Himself through His Messenger. That is precisely the recognition of the principle of *tawḥîd* and *risâslah*; and in the nature of things that was the starting point of all the other message or messages. Although Watt's conclusions point to this fact, yet he would not admit it and would instead have us believe that that fundamental issue was not explained in the early passages!

Similarly Watt fails to see the wood from the trees in his treatment of the *intellectual* situatin. He says that the Makkans, because of their wealth and prosperity, came to "have too high opinion of human powers and to forget man's creatureliness." The nomad also had a high opinion of human power, says Watt, but it was tempered by his belief in *fate* which according to him specially controlled his sustenance, the hour of his death, his worldly happiness or misery and the sex of a child.[2] After somewhat elaborating these statements Watt concludes that the early passages of the Qur'ân deal with these "intellectual problems" in that the facts ascribed by the pagan to Fate or Time (*dahr*) are ascribed to God. "God's power and goodness are shown

1. *Ibid.*, pp. 75-76.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 76.

in causing plants to grow; that is precisely *rizq* or sustenance; God's power in creating man includes the determination of sex, though it is not explicitly mentioned. It is God who causes man to die, and on the Last day decides his ultimate happiness or misery."[1]

Once again it must be pointed out that what is identified as the intellectual attitude of the Makkans was perhaps the attitude only of a few of its rich individuals. The attitude of the generality of the Makkans and also that of the nomadic population were identical regarding *fate* and the four matters specially ascribed to it. Not only that. Even many of the rich Makkans did not at all abandon their faith in fate in respect of those matters. Most important of all, neither the rich and not-so-rich Makkans, nor the nomadic people had ceased to worship and propitiate the many gods and goddesses either for obtaining favour or warding off evil in respect of the four above mentioned matters. If, therefore, the Qur'ân was bringing those matters under the jurisdiction of God, as Watt recognizes, it was in fact only declaring His supremacy and power over those very special regions and was at the same time bringing home the futility and inefficacy of the gods and goddesses whom the Arabs, nomads and city-dwellers alike, were wont to worship and propitiate for the purpose. In other words, in this spehere also the early passages of the Qur'ân were only enunciating yet another aspect of the doctrine of *tawḥîd*.

But Watt seems to be so determined to overlook or sidetrack this fundamental fact that even in his treatment of the *Religious* situation in the fourth sub-section he studiously avoids making any mention of the Makkans' worship of the gods and goddesses. As if these latter did not exist in the Makkan religious situation or had dwindled into so much insignificance that no reference to them is called for in considering the religious situation! This is all the more strange because only a little later on we find Watt trying to convince us that the Makkan opposition to the Prophet was roused not by his denunciation of the leaders' selfishness and lack of generosity but by his denunciation of the idols! The only indirect reference to the idols in Watt's whole discussion on the religious situation is that the Makkans probably recognized in the acts of generosity, which was also in line with the ideal of *muru'ah*, something of the principle of sacrifice, "in just the same way as their forefathers had propitiated the pagan gods by the sacrifice

1. *Ibid.*, p. 77.

of animals."[1] We need not here question Watt's *volte-face*; for just a little earlier he has suggested that the ideal of generosity had been either lost sight of by the rich Makkans or was irrelevant to their new attitude! Be that as it may, by thus relegating the idols and their worship into the background Watt says that the religious aspect of pre-Islamic Makka was "concerned with that by which man live" and in which "they find the meaning and significance of life." But though the "old nomadic religion found the meaning of life in honour" and "in the maintènance of the tribe", continues Watt, "that religious attitude had broken down in Mecca because of the increasing individualism". There, says he, a new ideal, that of "supereminence in wealth" had replaced the ideal of honour. But this "was an ideal and a religion which might satisfy a few people for a generation or two", but it was "not likely to satisfy a large community for long"; for people would soon discover that there are indeed many things in life that money cannot buy. "The tensions due to the inadequacy of this religion of wealth", concludes Watt, "are perhaps felt most keenly by those who have some wealth, but are only on the fringes of the very wealthy," because they have the leisure and capacity for reflecting on "the limitations of the power of money."[2]

The last sentence is a foreboding of Watt's theory of struggle between the "haves and nearly hads" which he next unfolds and which has already been noticed. It may only be noted here that his drawing of the religious situation is extremely refracted and motivated, if not misleading, and it is totally non-cognizant of the most obvious aspect of the Makkan religious situation, namely polytheism and idols, of which the Makkan élite were the champions and priestly class. Making all allowance for Watt's theory of the "religion of wealth", it cannot be said that the Makkans, not even the very rich of them, had turned atheists and totally god-less materialists. Nor did their mercantilism and supposed new individualism had obliterated the sense of tribal honour and system of social solidarity. Most important of all, they had not at all abandoned their forefathers' gods and goddesses. What is said by Watt here is in essence a repetition of what has been said in connection with the social, moral and intellectual situation. In making this repetition in a different form Watt appears to equate what he says as the social and moral ideals, particularly generosity and the ideal of tribal honour, with the religious atti-

1. *Ibid.*, pp. 78-79.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 78.

tude. By so doing Watt reiterates that the early passages of the Qur'ân emphasize man's creatureliness, tell him of God's creating him and providing him with all that is necessary for a happy life, remind him that "to Him is the return" and exhort him to be grateful, to worship Him and to be generous. On the whole "the early passages of the Qur'ân culminate in teaching God's goodness and power (as Creator and Judge) and in exhorting man to acknowledge and express his dependence on God."[1]

Yes; the early passages do all these. But how does the emphasis on "God's goodness and power" and the exhortation to man to "acknowledge and express his dependence on God" really differ from an inculcation of the principle of absolute Unity of God (*tawḥîd*)? Not the least by simply omitting from the context the mention of the gods and goddesses. As already mentioned, the emphasis on God's goodness and power and on man's creatureliness is made not simply against the background of the "religion of wealth", but more against that of the other beliefs, practices and allegiances, particularly man's worship of the many imaginary gods and goddesses, including the wealth goddess. It was to all intents and purposes an inculcation of the doctrine of the absolute Unity of God and an exhortation to man to abandon allegiance to all the other gods and goddesses and to return to the One Only God in this world as indeed "to Him is the return" in the hereafter.

Finally a word about the theme of adoption or adaption by Islam of the pre-existing ideas and ideals such as generosity, fatalism, etc. It is good that these two, particularly generosity, were found among the Arabs. Or else the orientalists would certainly have spared no pains to find them in Greek-Syriac-Aramic or Judaeo-Christian traditions. The general allegation of the Qur'ân's having drawn and built on the pre-existing elements has already been dealt with.[2] It may only be emphasized here that neither the Qur'ân nor the Prophet claims to have introduced anything new; nor do they in any way attempt to conceal that fact. On the contrary, they ask man to accept their most important teaching, the doctrine of absolute monotheism, on the avowed ground that all the previous Prophets conveyed the same message.

1. *Ibid.*, p. 79.

2. *Supra*, Ch. XI. Watt here also draws the conclusion, under his section on *The Originality of the Qur'ân*, that in its use of the stories of the previous prophets the Qur'ân's originality lies not in the facts but "in its selection of points for emphasis" and that the term *'anbâ'* used in this connection denotes "significance" not facts. (*Ibid.*, pp. 80-85). The untenability of this suggestion has also been dealt with before. See *supra*, pp. 278-282.

Neither the Ka'ba nor the sanctuary at Jerusalem were built for the first time by the Prophet or his followers. They existed there for ages before the Prophet appeared. Similarly the institutions of prayer (*ṣalâh*), fasting, pilgimage and sacrifice were all there. Islam adopted and confirmed them not because, as the orientalists often say, they were Arab or pagan rites and practices, but because, as the Qur'ân and the Prophet very clearly assert, these also were introduced, under God's command, by the previous Prophets. The truth of these assertions is evident even from the sacred texts of the critics of Islam. That is why the Qur'ân and the Prophet often sought support for their assertions from those who knew the previous Books. It is therefore not of much importance to try to show how Islam built on previous materials. Of much more importance is to understand why it *avowedly* did so. It would then be seen that the real originality of the Qur'ân lies in its emphasis on the fact that a true recognition of the Unity of God involves also a recognition of the basic unity of mankind as a whole and the unity and identity of God's message to all the peoples at all times and climes. The Qur'ân holds that from time to time man deviated and deviates from the eternal and true message of God as communicated through all the Prophets. It recapitulates and codifies that message and asks man to return to the One Only God and to His true and eternal message. The Qur'ân is indeed revlevant not only to its contemporary situation; it is also relevant to the continuing situation of mankind.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE EARLY PHASE OF THE MISSION AND WATT'S SOCIO-ECONOMIC INTERPRETATION

It has been seen[1] that Watt assumes an acute trade rivalry between what he conceives to be a stronger group and a weaker group of Quraysh clans of Makka and attempts to explain developments like the *ḥarb al-fijâr* and the *ḥilf al-fuḍûl* in that context. He even suggests that before his call to Prophethood Muḥammad (ﷺ) was excluded from the "most lucrative trade" or he "might not have been so excluded". The faults and untenability of these assumptions have already been pointed out. In his treatment of the early phase of the Prophet's mission Watt introduces the same assumption, though not directly, but indirectly through a pseudo-socialistic formulation, namely, the struggle between "the haves and the nearly hads". He first makes some general observations about the early converts and then unfolds his main thesis. The present chapter takes into account this aspect of his socio-economic interpretation.

1. THE REMARKS REGARDING EARLY CONVERTS

Like his views regarding the early teachings of the Prophet, Watt's views about the earliest converts too sharply differ from those of Margoliouth. Thus, while the latter builds up his theory of "Islam as a secret society" largely on the basis of 'Abû Bakr's (r.a.) being one of the earliest, or rather the earliest, convert to Islam and his having introduced a number of converts to the Prophet, Watt calls in question both 'Abû Bakr's (r.a.) early conversion and his role in being instrumental in the conversion of a number of others. Watt does not, however, mention Margoliouth's name in this connection. In general he accepts Ibn Isḥâq's list of early Muslims as "roughly accurate", but says that since nobility in Islam "depended theoretically on service to the Islamic community" the "descendants" of particular converts made the most of "their ancestors' claims to merit in this respect". So, if it is claimed for anyone that "he was among the first twenty Muslims, it is usually safe to assume that he was about thirty-fifth".[2] In this connection Watt refers to the differences in the reports regarding the order of conversion of 'Alî, 'Abû

1. *Supra*, ch. IX.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 86.

Bakr and Zayd ibn Ḥârithah and says that 'Abû Bakr's "later primacy has probably been reflected back into the early records" and that therefore Zayd ibn Ḥârithah "has probably the best claim to be regarded as the first male Muslim".[1] He also calls in question the fact of 'Abû Bakr's having introduced a group of five persons — 'Uthmân ibn 'Affân, Al-Zubayr ibn al-'Awwâm, 'Abd al-Raḥmân ibn 'Awf, Sa'd ibn 'Abî Waqqâṣ and Ṭalḥah ibn 'Ubayd Allah — to Islam. Watt points out that these were the very persons who, together with 'Alî, were nominated by 'Umar on the eve of his death to settle the question of succession to the *khilâfah.* Watt implies that this fact has been reflected in the account of their conversion and states: "It is hardly credible that, more than twenty years earlier, the same five should have come to Muḥammad as a group".[2] Watt also points out that of this group, 'Abd al-Raḥmân ibn 'Awf, is mentioned in another report as having embraced Islam along with a different group which included 'Uthmân ibn Maẓ'ûn and there are still other reports that speak of four others, Khâlid ibn Sa'îd, 'Abû Dharr, 'Amr ibn 'Abasah and Al-Zubayr, each claiming to be the fourth or fifth in the order of conversion.[3]

That the reports differ in respect of the order of conversion of the first three or four male converts is well-known. It is also true that there are reports regarding the four last named persons in which each claims to be the fourth or fifth convert. These differences in the reports only illustrate the fact that in each case the claimant was not aware of the exact time of or earlier conversion of the other. There is no evidence whatsoever to suggest that there was any conscious attempt to glorify someone at the cost of the other. Nor does it appear with regard to these four persons and 'Alî, Zayd and 'Abû Bakr that the claims to their early conversions were made by their descendants or admirers.

It is of course true that nobility in Islam depends on service to the cause of the Islamic community; but this latter characteristic is not coterminous with early conversion. Nor was a claim to nobility invariably based on a claim to early conversion, though the fact of early conversion is itself a distinctive merit and the early converts — *al-Sâbiqûn al-'Awwalûn* — have always been held in special esteem irrespective of whether any of them

1. *Ibid.*
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*, p. 87.

attained prominence and position of primacy or not.

In saying that Zayd ibn Ḥârithah "has possibly the best claim to be regarded as the first male Muslim" Watt in fact echoes the view of Nöldeke whom he also cites in this connection. It may once again be emphasized here, however, that so far as 'Alî, Zayd and 'Abû Bakr are concerned the reports are equally in favour of each to be considered the first male convert. As the first two were members of the Prophet's household, it may safely be assumed that outside that circle 'Abû Bakr was the first convert. Whatever might have been the case, it is clearly unjustifiable to say that his subsequent primacy has been reflected back into the records relating to his conversion. If such projection of subsequent primacy into the records of conversion of any person had ever taken place, it should have been so also in respect of 'Umar who attained no less a position of primacy and nobility but who is not described in the records as having been even among the first forty converts.

As Watt himself notes, the list of early converts "contains the names of a number of people who were not prominent in later times".[1] Thus, the general picture that emerges is that while there are persons who subsequently became prominent in Islam but for whom no claim to early conversion has been made while there are others who, notwithstanding their not being prominent are nonetheless reckoned among the very early converts. The only reasonable conclusion is that there does not appear to be any valid reason for suspecting the records of one or two who attained primacy and are also described as very early converts.

Similarly groundless is the suspicion about the five persons whom 'Abû Bakr is reported to have introduced to Islam. The very fact that 'Umar selected them for settling the question of succession, far from its being reflected into the records of those persons' conversion, is rather a confirmation of their early conversion and a proof of their integrity, sincerity and devotion to the cause of Islam; for 'Umar, being their contemporary and fellow-citizen, both before his own conversion and after it, must have been quite conscious of their antecedents and character when he made his selection. It is also not quite correct to say, as Watt does, that these five persons came to the Prophet "as a group" seeking conversion. All that is discernible from the reports is that 'Abû Bakr persuaded them to embrace Islam and introduced them, not all at a time, to the Prophet.

1. *Ibid.*

II. THE PSEUDO-SOCIALISTIC CASTING

In surveying the early converts Watt emphasizes their socio-economic background in order to identify their motives and reasons for accepting Islam. For that purpose he indicates the relative positions of the clans within the community as a whole and also the positions of the individual converts within their respective clans. His appraisal of the clans is as follows:

Hâshim: Under "Abû Ṭâlib's leadership it was losing ground".[1]

Al-Muṭṭalib: "This clan had apparently become very weak and was much dependent on Hâshim".[2]

Taym: "This clan also counted for little in the affairs of Mecca".[3]

Zuhrah: It "seems to have been more prosperous than those of Taym and al-Muṭṭâlib"; and it had business and matrimonial relations with the clan of 'Abd Shams.[4]

'Adiyy; Its general position "was probably also deteriorating". "No members of the clan other than 'Umar seem to have been of much consequence in Mecca".[5]

Al-Ḥârith ibn Fihr: "Its position had perhaps been improving, but it was not of first importance".[6]

'Âmir: "About the time of the Hijrah it seems to have been improving its position" but its general status was like that of Al-Ḥârith ibn Fihr.[7]

Asad: It "had evidently grown in importance", left its old associates of the *Ḥilf al-Fuḍûl* and entered "the circles of 'big business'".[8]

Nawfal: Though not strong in numbers "its leading men had considerable influence" and worked in association with 'Abd Shams and Makhzûm.[9]

1. *Ibid.*, 88.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*, 89.
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*, 91.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*, 92.
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*

'Abd Shams: It "disputed with that of Makhzûm the leading place in Mecca", but "the rivalry was not unduly bitter".[1]

Makhzûm: "The Makhzûm were apparently the dominant political group in Mecca..."[2]

Sham: "Sahm was one of the more powerful clans".[3]

Jumaḥ: "This clan was also powerful, but not quite so powerful as Sahm".[4]

'Abd al-Dâr: Once foremost but "now counted for little in Meccan affairs".[5]

It would appear that, according to Watt's appraisal, roughly 7 out of the 14 clans mentioned were more or less prominent and powerful, while the other seven were not so. In the first category would come Makhzûm, 'Abd Shams, Sahm, Jumaḥ, Nawfal, Asad and Zuhrah; whereas in the second category would come Hâshim, Al-Muṭṭalib, Taym, 'Adiyy, Al-Ḥârith ibn Fihr, 'Âmir and 'Abd al-Dâr. Watt specifically mentions a little over 60 persons as early converts from these clans, including their confederates (*ḥulafâ'*). He also indicates the individual status of a number of converts within their respective clans. Having done this he divides the "principal early Muslims" into three classes — (i) *Younger sons of the best families*, "men from the most influential families of the most influential clans"; (ii) *Men, mostly young, from other families*, "not sharply distinguished from the previous one" and (iii) *Men, without close ties to any clan* — "a comparatively small number" of converts.[6] Watt does not distinguish the confederates as a separate class, saying that converts from them mostly fall in the second class.[7]

Having thus surveyed the clans and the converts from them Watt makes two points. He says that "young Islam was essentially a movement of young men" and, secondly, "it was *not* a movement of the 'down and outs', of the scum of the population" but it drew its support "from those about the middle who", realizing the disparity between them and those at the top, felt that they

1. *Ibid.*
2. *Ibid.*, p. 93.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 94.
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*, p. 95.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 95-96.

were underprivileged. "It was", concludes Watt, "not so much a struggle between 'haves' and 'have nots' as between 'haves' and 'nearly hads'".[1]

II. THE FACTS BELIE THE FICTION

Now, it is true that most of the early converts were young men. This point, as Watt acknowledges, has already been emphasized by an Egyptian writer.[2] It is also true that Islam was not a movement of the 'down and outs', of the scum of the population. But the conclusion, which is particularly Watt's own, that it was a sort of a struggle between "haves" and "nearly hads", is not tenable; for the basis of the assertion, that the majority or even a sizeable number of the early converts were those who had laboured under a sense of disparity between them and those at the top and felt themselves underprivileged is not made out even by the facts adduced by Watt himself. The assumption is not applicable even with regard to the converts from the less prominent clans. It is noteworthy that of the 60 or so converts sepcifically mentioned by Watt more than forty appear, according to his own enumeration, from among the more influential and prosperous clans, whereas less than a half of that number appear from the other group of clans. Even with regard to this latter group of converts Watt admits: "as we move down the scale to the weaker clans and to the weaker branches of the chief clans, we find among the Muslims men of greater influence within their clan or family".[3] The allusion is obviously to such persons as 'Abû Bakr, 'Umar, Ṭalḥah and 'Abd al-Raḥmân ibn 'Awf, about whom Watt specifically mentions their prominent positions within their respective clans.[4] It cannot be assumed that such influential men of the so-called weaker clans smarted under a sense of their disparity with those of the richer and more powerful clans. For, in that case, the sense of dissatisfaction would have been more general and more acute among the ordinary members of those weaker clans and we should have found a wider initial response to Islam from among those people. But that is not at all the case.

Watt attempts to show with regard to a number of converts from both the weaker and stronger clans that those converts occupied rather "inferior" positions within their respective clans or families. His obvious intention

1. *Ibid.*, p. 96.
2. *Ibid.*, p.96, citing 'Abd al-Muta'âl al-Ṣa'îdî's *Shabâb al-Quraysh*. Cario, 1947.
3. Watt, *op. cit.*, p. 95.
4. See *ibid.*, pp. 89-90.

behind the attempt is to prepare the ground for the theory of struggle between 'haves' and 'nearly hads'. The arguments adduced in each case, however, are either not at all convincing or merely conjectural. For instance, speaking about the three early converts from the clan of 'Abd Shams, 'Uthmân ibn 'Affân, 'Abû Ḥudhayfah ibn 'Utbah ibn Rabî'ah and Khâlid ibn Sa'îd ibn al-'Âṣ ('Abû Uḥayḥah), Watt states as follows. He says that "'Uthmân's immediate forebears were not prominent and he "probably felt envious of his richer and more powerful relatives".[1] No specific fact is mentioned to support this supposed envy on 'Uthmân's part. With regard to the two other persons Watt says that though they were sons of leading men of the clan, the fact that their mothers were from Kinânah, "a poor relative of Quraysh, suggests that they were inferior memebrs of their families".[2] It is not understandable why their fathers, in spite of their having married in the supposedly poor clan, did not suffer any diminution in their status and continued to be leaders of their clan and why their sons should have been regarded as inferior members of their families on the same score. Moreover, even if inferior memebers in their own families, as sons respectively of the two foremost leaders of the clan the general status of both 'Abû Ḥudhayfah and Khâlid was in no way inferior to, if not better than, that of any other youth within or outside their clan. Of Khunays ibn Ḥudhayfah ibn Qays of Banû Sahm Watt observes that "presumably" he belonged to "one of the less important branches of the clan".[3] Once again, there is no mention of the basis for this presumption. Similarly, with regard to six other converts of the same clan, all of them sons of Al-Ḥârith ibn Qays, one of the leaders of the clan and all of whom migrated to Abyssinia, Watt says that "after the death of al-Ḥârith his family found it difficult to maintain their position."[4] Obviously, on their conversion, the sons of Al-Ḥârith found it difficult to maintain their position in Makka; but that situation was a result of their conversion and not at all anterior to it. Nor could migration to Abyssinia be conceivably a contrivance to retrieve the family status. Similarly characteristic is Watt's argument regarding the status of some of the converts from his less important clans. Thus, with reference to Ja'far ibn 'Abî Ṭâlib and Ḥamzah ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, of Banû Hâshim, Watt could lay his hand on

1. *Ibid.*, p. 93.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*, p. 94.
4. *Ibid.*

no other fact than their marriage. He says that the "inferior position" of both in the clan "is shown by the fact that they had wives from the nomadic tribe of Khath'am".[1] Clearly, such arguments are not sufficient to substantiate the prevalence of a sense of dissatisfaction over a supposedly underprivileged status affecting youths from influential and uninfluential clans alike. It may also be pointed out that clans like Kinânah were not at all lower in social rank, nor was any stigma attached to marriage with poor or nomadic tribes. Even sons of slave-maids like 'Antara ibn Shaddâd could attain the most respectable position in the Arabian society.

Even if we accept Watt's statements regarding the personal status of individual converts and also take into account his other suggestion that there was by that time a slackening of the clan's hold over its members and a corresponding growth of individualism[2] so that an ambitious young man did not always identify his personal interests with those of his clan and sought improvement of his lot in other channels, that would constitute only half of the argument. For, in order to prove Watt's theory it is necessary also to show that the early messages of Islam offered immediate and sure prospects for the 'nearly hads' to elevate themselves to the status of the 'haves'. But except for showing from some early Qur'ânic passages that there was a denunciation of extreme materialism and inordinate love for wealth on the part of the Quraysh leaders, and an exhortation to attend to the traditional duty of care for the poor, the orphan and the needy, and fairness in trade dealings, particularly in matters of weight and measure, no other particular economic reform programme aimed at improving the position of the 'nearly hads' could be made out from those passages. It cannot be argued that reforms in the above mentioned lines would help such young men in improving their lot in any way so that they instantly relegated their primary allegiance to their clans and families to the background and gave up their ancestral beliefs and worships. Nor is there any instance of an early convert's having by his conversion immediately improved his material position. On the contrary, persons like 'Abû Bakr had to spend their fortunes for the sake of protecting the poor and helpless converts, while others like Ṣuhayb ibn Sinân did not hesitate to abandon their hard-earned wealth to the cupidity of the Quraysh instead of shutting their eyes to the light they had seen. And so

1. *Ibid.*, p. 88.
2. See *ibid.*, pp. 18-20.

far as expatriates and persons of no clan-connection were concerned, almost all of them suffered persecution and loss of trade and profession in consequence of their conversion to Islam. Surely the spectacle is not at all illustrative of a group of nearly-hads' struggle for attaining the status of the 'haves'.

In fact Watt himself exculdes most of the converts from the range of his theory when, after having propounded it, he considers "more fully" the early converts' reasons for responding to the Prophet's call. Thus, to begin with, he refers to the *ḥanîfs* and says that prior to the Prophet's call "a tendency towards a vague monotheism had been widespread" and that for persons like 'Ubayd Allah ibn Jaḥsh, 'Uthmân ibn Maẓ'ûn and Sa'îd ibn Zayd ibn 'Amr Islam acted "as a centre of integration for these vague and nebulous tendencies".[1] Watt next says that though the question of economic facts "is relevant to this early monotheistic tendency", it could be "most conveniently discussed" in connection with those who had taken no definite steps to break with paganism.[2] But then, with regard to the first of the three classes he distinguished — "the younger sons of the best families" — Watt states that there was "probably no explicit awareness that economic and political factors were involved in what they were doing".[3] Speaking particularly of Khâlid ibn Sa'îd of this group Watt observes that he (Khâlid) "was presumably conscious only of religious reason when he became a Muslim" and that the growing concentration of wealth in few hands could have only an unsettling effect upon him in that it made him aware of the need for a religious faith.[4] In this connection Watt recalls Khâlid's dream in which he saw himself standing on the brink of a pit of fire, his father trying to push him into it while another person preventing him from falling. Watt thinks that this dream probably means that Khâlid's father was forcing him to "enter the whirlpool of Meccan finance which he regarded as soul-destroying".[5] "Whatever the truth of this matter", concludes Watt, "his conscious thought appears to have been entirely on the religious plane".[6] Thus does Watt say that his first class of converts were not really actuated by economic motives.

1. *Ibid.*, pp. 96-97.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 97.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*, 97.
5. *Ibid.*, 97-98.
6. *Ibid.*, 98.

He next refers to the cases Ḥamzah and 'Umar (r.a.) who, according to his appraisal of the clans, are to be taken as representing his second class of converts. With regard to both of them Watt observes that "loyalty to the family or clan was involved" in the process of their conversion. While Ḥamzah (r.a.) was roused to defend his nephew "from injury and insults at the hands and mouths of another clan", 'Umar's (r.a.) rage against his sister and her husband was due, according to Watt, to his worry and anxiety "through the fear that their conversion might lead to a further deterioration of the general position of the clan".[1] Watt further observes that there "is no whisper of economics" in the matter of 'Umar's conversion.[2]

Thus, by Watt's own admission, Ḥamzah and 'Umar, (r.a.) two representatives respectively of two of his second category of clans, though spurred into action by their clan spirit, were not at all actuated by economic motives in embracing Islam. Particularly 'Umar, as Watt notes, feared that the conversion of his sister and her husband, "might lead to a further deterioration[3] of the general position of the clan". The attitude here recognized by Watt is clearly the very antithesis of the nearly hads' intention to improve their material position by conversion to Islam.

Watt next moves on to a consideration of his third category of converts and says that they were influenced more by their insecurity "than by any prospect of economic or political advantage".[4] Watt then observes that if hopes of economic reform were present among the early Muslims, "we should expect to find them in the second class", adding that the early passages of the Qur'ân speak of such reforms and that the whole message is relevant to the total Makkan situation. He further observes: "It would not be surprising if some men were attracted chiefly by the political and economic implication of the message. Yet it is unlikely that there were many such".[5]

Of course it "would not be surprising if some men" were actuated by mundane motives in changing their faiths; but since, in Watt's own words, "it is unlikely that there were many such", it is only surprising that none-

1. *Ibid.*

2. *Ibid.*

3. The expression "further deterioration" is in line with Watt's characterization of Banû 'Adiyy as a second-rate clan.

4. Watt, *op. cit.*, 98.

5. *Ibid.*

theless Watt virtually generalizes this admittedly slender *probability* in order to sustain the theory of a struggle between the "haves" and the "nearly hads". In fact this last mentioned remark of his is a desperate attempt on his part to save his theory against an overwhelming array of facts he cannot but admit. His reference to the economic aspects of the early Qur'ânic passages is also a poor attempt to save the theory; for, as already pointed out, the economic reforms envisaged in the early passages of the Qur'ân could in no way be said to have been aimed at improving the position of the "nearly hads". Nor is the question of relevance of the Qur'ânic teachings to the contemporary situation, which has been examined earlier, of any avail in substantiating the theory.

III. AN OLD WINE IN A NEW BOTTLE

In sum, according to Watt's own analysis, the situation was as follows:

(i) His first class of converts, the "younger sons of best families", constitutes almost two-thirds of a total of about sixty of the very early converts. They were not actuated by any economic motive but by religious motive alone in embracing Islam. In fact there could not be any question of their joining the Islamic movement for elevating themselves to the position of the "haves", for they were already the "haves". This fact of the majority of the very early converts being from among the sons of the best families decisively belies the theory of a struggle between the haves and the nearly hads.

(ii) As regards Watt's second class of converts, namely, young men from other families "not sharply distinguished from the previous one", he says that if hopes of economic reform were present among the early Muslims "we should expect to find them" in that class. Yet he specifically mentions the cases of only two, Ḥamzah and 'Umar (r.a.) who, by implication belonged to that class but who admittedly were not actuated by economic considerations. Watt does not mention by name anyone else of this class who embraced Islam clearly from economic motives. In any case, this class together with the third formed only a minority of the early converts.

(iii) As regards his third class, "men without close ties to any clan", Watt says that their number was "comparatively small" and they were influenced more by their insecurity "than by any prospect of economic or political advantage".

It must not be supposed that Watt mentions all these facts by way of nullifying his theory. On the contrary he has a clear aim which he presents as a

sort of grand-total of the theory of struggle between haves and the nearly hads. After having surveyed all the above mentioned facts Watt says that it was only the Prophet and "the wiser among his followers" who were conscious of the socio-political and economic implications of his message and that these certainly weighed with them when they directed the affairs of the Muslims, though "it was on the religious plane that men were summoned to Islam" and that most of the converts also were actuated only by religious motives. The Prophet, says Watt, was "in no wise a socialistic reformer but the inaugurator of a new religion" and that while he was conscious of the religious, socio-political and economic ills of his time, "he regarded the religious aspect as the fundamental one and concentrated on it".[1] It was "on the religious plane that men were summoned to Islam" and that this determined the ethos of the men who responded to his call and who "took their religious beliefs and practices with deadly seriousness". "Conscious thoughts about economics and politics" hardly played any part in the process of their conversion.[2] Yet, says Watt, "Muḥammad and the wiser among his followers must have been alive to the social and political implications of his message, and that, in directing the affairs of the Muslims, such considerations certainly weighed with them".[3]

Now, if this is the sum and substance of the elaborately built up theory of struggle between the haves and the nearly hads, it is hardly necessary to point out that this view is scarcely different from that of many of Watt's predecessors who say in so many ways that the Prophet, being aware of the socio-economic and religious ills of his society, embarked upon a programme of reform which, though essentially religious in nature, nonetheless aimed at bettering the political and economic position of his own and the so-called second-rate clans. It may also be mentioned here that the Prophet's deadliest adversary, 'Abû Jahl, viewed the Prophet's cause in the light of Banû Makhzûm's competition with Banû Hâshim for prominence and leadership.[4] The orientalists adopt more or less the same view and try to relate the rise of Islam in one way or other to the inter-clan rivalry of Quraysh. To this traditional, simplistic and rather long-exploded view Watt attempts to add the dimension of a speudo-socialistic theory of struggle between the

1. *Ibid.*, 99.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*
4. See *infra*, pp.618-619.

"haves" and the "nearly hads". By his assumtion of an acute trade rivalry between two groups of Quraysh clans, by his theory of a growth of individualism among the Makkan mercantile élite, by his discussion on the relative positions of the clans in which he assigns a second-rate position to the Prophet's clan (Banû Hâshim), by his attempted identification of the individual status of the converts within their respective clans and families and yet saying that they were not really actuated by economic motives in embracing Islam and, above all, by his grandiloquent theory of struggle between the 'haves' and the 'nearly hads' Watt merely serves the old and stale wine in a glitteringly new bottle.

In doing so, however, Watt not only fails to give a really dispassionate explanation for the rise of Islam but underestimates the members of his "best families" too. He says that the younger sons of those families were not conscious of the political and economic implications of Islam and were actuated by religious motives. This is not true, and it could not be true; for persons like 'Abû Jahl did not fail to see the political implications of the Prophet's mission and did not cease pointing these out to their people. In fact the young men of those families were as much aware as 'Abû Jahl and his sort were that the acceptance of Islam meant the acceptance of the Prophet's leadership in all matters, religious and temporal alike. Yet, those young men embraced Islam not because of their "individualism" born out of material considerations but because their love for the truth transcended their all other considerations.

On the other hand, there was no question of the so-called second-rate clans', particularly the Prophet's clan Banû Hâshim's not understanding the matter, since at least 'Abû Jahl openly considered it an issue of leadership between his clan and Banû Hâshim. Yet neither its leader 'Abû Ṭâlib nor the vast majority of its other members embraced Islam. On the contrary one of its leaders, 'Abû Lahab, even ranged himself against the Prophet. Clearly, this attitude of the leadership and generality of Banû Hâshim was due to the fact that they did not, in spite of 'Abû Jahl's fulminations, make the Prophet's mission an issue of leadership between Banû Hâshim and Banû Makhzûm because they were confident of their nobility and position of primacy in the Makkan society whether a Prophet arose from among them or not and because their attachment to their ancestral religion superseded their other considerations.

And since the leaders and generality of Banû Hâshim did not view the Prophet's mission as an issue for leadership between them and Banû Makhzûm, there was no question of the Prophet's having launched the movement for obtaining leadership either for himself or his clan. He and the "wiser" among his followers were of course conscious of the political implications of Islam; but the fulfilment of those implications was never their primary or secondary motive. They were not actuated by the prospects of any material advantage that might accrue to them in the event of the success of Islam. In fact the Qur'ân, in reply to this very specific accusation of the unbelieving Makkan leaders, repeatedly pointed out that neither leadership nor material gains were the Prophet's motive, nor were those the real points at issue. This fact of the Qur'ân's denial of the accusation is in itself a clear proof that the political implications of the Prophet's mission were no subtle secret understood only by the Prophet and his close associates, as Watt suggests. His theory is merely a recapitualtion in another form of the Makkan unbelievers' accusation and it similarly fails to grasp the real point at issue. That no political or material motives impelled the Prophet is best illustrated by the fact that when the time came for reaping the fruits of success he did not limit the privilege to the members of his own clan or the group of the so-called 'nearly hads'.[1]

1. See also *supra*, Chaps. IV, IX.

SECTION VI
THE MAKKAN OPPOSITION

CHAPTER XXV

THE MAKKAN OPPOSITION: NATURE, CAUSES AND IMMEDIATE ALLEGATION

(I) NATURE OF OPPOSITION

The reaction to the Messenger's call was three-fold. There were a number of good souls from among the aristocratic class as well as from the common people of Makka who readily accepted the truth, became converts to the new faith and dedicated their lives and resources to the cause. Secondly, the majority of the Makkan people, particularly the leaders, were for various reasons opposed to the Prophet's mission. Some of them were stubborn opponents who set themselves tooth and nail to stop the spread of the new faith and to nip it in the bud. There were others who were more or less moderate in their attitude and were at times inclined to come to terms with the new movement. Thirdly, outside the town of Makka and its vicinity, and the town of Ṭâ'if, the attitude of the tribes, when they came to know about the movement, was generally one of passiveness or sincere inquisitiveness. It was mainly the Makkan aristocrats who organized and led the opposition to the Messenger and instigated the Makkan populace and, at times, some of the non-Makkan tribes against him. Till the migration to Madina, thus, the opposition to him and to Islam was essentially the opposition of the Makkan aristocratic and priestly class.

This role of the Makkan leaders will be pretty clear as we proceed with the story of opposition. The Qur'ân bears an eloquent testimony to this role of theirs in a number of its passages. The following may be mentioned by way of illustration. They all give a graphic description of the leaders' and their followers' position in the hereafter on account of their opposition to the Prophet and their rejection of the truth.

(a) 34:31-33: (*Sûrat Saba'*)

﴿ ...ولو ترىٰ إذ الظـٰلمون موقوفون عند ربهم يرجع بعضهم إلىٰ بعض القول يقول الذين استضعفوا للذين استكبروا لولا أنتم لكنا مؤمنين * قال الذين استكبروا للذين استضعفوا أنحن صددناكم عن الهدىٰ بعد إذ جآءكم بل كنتم مجرمين * وقال الذين استضعفوا للذين استكبروا بل مكر اليل والنهار إذ تأمروننا أن نكفر بالله ونجعل له، أندادا وأسروا الندامة لما رأوا العذاب... ﴾ (٣٤: ٣١-٣٣)

"... If you could see the transgressors when they will be made to stand before their Lord, hurling the word (the blame), one to the other — those who had been dom-

ineered over saying to the arrogant ones (the leaders), 'Had it not been for you, we would surely have been believers.' The arrogant ones will say (in reply) to those who were domineered over, 'Was it we who barred you from the guidance when it came to you? No, rather you yourselves were sinners.' And those who were domineered over will say to the arrogant ones, 'No, it was a conspiracy by day and night (on your part) when you commanded us to disbelieve in Allah and to set up equals to him.' And they will (thus) express regrets when they faced the punishment..." (34:31-33)

(b) 33:67-68:

﴿وقالوا ربنا إنا أطعنا سادتنا وكبرآءنا فأضلونا السبيلا * ربنا ءاتهم ضعفين من العذاب والعنهم لعنا كبيرا﴾ (٣٣:٦٧-٦٨)

"And they will say: 'Our Lord, we obeyed our chiefs and great ones thus they misled us as to the rigth path. Our Lord, subject them to a redoubled punishment and curse them with the most abominable curse!'"

(c) 40:47-48:

﴿وإذ يتحآجّون فى النار فيقول الضعفـٰٓؤا للذين استكبروا إنا كنا لكم تبعا فهل أنتم مغنون عنا نصيبا من النار * قال الذين استكبروا إنا كل فيها إن الله قد حكم بين العباد﴾ (٤٠:٤٧-٤٨)

"And (behold) they will dispute, one with the other in the fire. Thus the weak ones (who followed) will say to those who had been arrogant: 'We only followed you; will you then relieve us by taking on yourselves some portion of the hell-fire?' Those who had been arrogant will say (in reply): ' We all are in it (fire)! Truly Allah has adjudged between His servants.' " (40:47-48).[1]

The opposition to the Prophet's mission started since its very beginning. This is clear, among other things, from the instances of oppression upon 'Abû Bakr and Ṭalḥah on their conversion and the secret manner in which the Muslims used to perform their prayers in solitary valleys in order to avoid being harassed and oppressed by the unbelievers.[2] These incidents were by all accounts previous to the taking of Dâr al-Arqam as the venue of their meetings and prayers. While mentioning these very facts Ibn Isḥâq states at the same time that the unbelievers did not turn against the Messenger of Allah until he began to mention and abuse theire gods and goddesses.[3] This statement of Ibn Isḥâq's does not mean that there was an initial period when the Messenger of Allah had remained silent about the gods and goddesses and had not made any attack upon their worship. Rejection of the

1. See also Q. 6:123; 14:21 and 38:5-7.
2. Ibn Hishâm, p. 264.
3. *Ibid.*

gods and goddesses and the worship of Allah Alone were implicit in the very doctrine of *tawḥîd* with which the mission started. It was also a natural corollary of the directive to the Prophet to get up and warn his people and proclaim the supremacy of his Lord, as contained in Q. 74:2-3. The directive is unanimously regarded as the beginning of the call to preach (*risâlah*). In view of these facts Ibn Isḥâq's statement means that the Makkan leaders started their opposition in a determined manner and began to organize themselves for the purpose as soon as they realized the threat posed by the new movement to their position as the priestly class and guardians of the Ka'ba, the central shrine where the principal gods and goddesses of the Arabs were housed. In fact this statement of Ibn Isḥâq's is in consonance with his other statement that open or public preaching of Islam began at the end of the third year of the mission. If these two statements are collated it would be clear that determined and organized opposition began with the inception of public propagation. Previous to that the opposition to the faith was mainly on family and individual level and was rather in the nature of family disciplining and chastisement of its renegades, though, at times, there was also group opposition, as seen in the incident leading to the taking of Dâr al-Arqam as the Muslims' meeting place.

As regards the leaders of opposition, Ibn Sa'd gives a fairly comprehensive list of them. This list is more or less confirmed by the other accounts, including that of Ibn Isḥâq, wherein the names of the principal opponents occur in connection with the description of various events. Arranged clan-wise, the list stands as follows :

1. Abû Lahab	-	Banû Hâshim
2. Abû Jahl	-	Banû Makhzûm
3. Al-Walîd ibn al-Mughîrah	-	" "
4. 'Abû Qays ibn al-Fâkih	-	" "
5. Zuhair ibn 'Abî 'Umayyah	-	" "
6. Al Sâ'ib ibn Ṣayfiyy ibn 'Âbid	-	" "
7. Al- Aswad ibn 'Abd al-Asad	-	" "
8. Al- Aswad ibn 'Abd Yaghûth	-	Banû Zuhrah
9. Al- Ḥârith ibn Qays ibn 'Addiy	-	Banû 'Addiy

(otherwise known as Ibn al-Ghayṭalah)

10.	'Umayyah ibn Khalaf	- Banû Jumaḥ
11.	'Ubayy ibn Khalaf (brother of the above)	- " "
12.	Al-'Âṣ ibn Wâ'il	- Banû Sahm
13.	Munabbih ibn al-Ḥajjâj	- " "
14.	Al-Naḍr ibn al-Ḥârith	- Banû 'Abd al- Dâr
15.	Al-'Âṣ ibn Sa'îd ibn al-'Âṣ	- Banû 'Umayyah (Banû 'Abd Shams)
16.	'Uqbah ibn 'Abî Mu'ayṭ	- " "
17.	Ibn al-Aṣdâ al-Ḥudhalî	- " "
18.	Al-Ḥakam ibn 'Abî al-'Aṣ	- " "
19.	Al -'Âṣ ibn Hâshim (Abû al-Bakhtarî)	- Banû Asad
20.	'Addiyy ibn al-Ḥamrâ'	- Banû Thaqîf

Of these persons the most inveterate enmeies of the Prophet were 'Abû Jahl, 'Abû Lahab and 'Uqbah ibn 'Abî Mu'ayṭ. Ibn Sa'd also mentions 'Utbah ibn Rabî'ah and his brother Shaybah ibn Rabî'ah of Banû 'Abd Shams and 'Abû Sufyân of Banû 'Umayyah as leaders of the opposition but says that they were of the moderate type.[1] The way 'Utbah beat 'Abû Bakr to unconsciousness does not show him to be quite moderate in attitude, though his subsequent role would confirm Ibn Sa'd's assessment. Similarly, whatever might have been 'Abu Sufyân's earlier activities, his subsequent role does not mark him out to be a moderate opponent. Of all the persons mentioned here, however, it was only he and Al-Ḥakam ibn 'Abî al-'Âṣ who ultimately embraced Islam. There were of course other leaders who are not mentioned here, such as the Lion of Qurysh, Nawfal ibn Khuwaylid ibn Asad of Banû Asad, and Suhayl ibn 'Umayr of Banû 'Âmir ibn Lu'ayy. The last named person was indeed a very notable figure among Quraysh. It was he who concluded, on their behalf, the treaty of Ḥudaybiyah with the Prophet.

The situation for these leaders was indeed difficult and complex. Hitherto they had been used only to the traditional pattern of tribal conflict and strug-

1. Ibn Sa'd. I, pp. 200-201.

gle for blood vengeance. For the first time in their history, and probably in human history as a whole, a group of conservative leaders were all of a sudden confronted with an array of revolutionary ideas that aimed at transforming their whole society and social relationships. Hence their response and reaction to the situation was always multi-faceted, mostly confused and at times desperate. Well might 'Abû Jahl attempt to champion the cause of Banû Makhzûm against Banû Hâshim, but he could not shut his eyes, nor those of the others, to the stark fact that a number of persons from his own clan, including his half-brother, had not only gone over to the new faith but also an important member of the clan like Arqam ibn Abî al-Arqam had turned his own house into a sanctuary and meeting place for the Muslims. Similarly 'Utbah ibn Rabî'ah, though he could beat 'Abû Bakr to unconsciousness, found himself in opposition to his own capable son, 'Abû Ḥudhayfah, who was one of the very early converts to Islam. The same was the position with the Lion of Quraysh, Nawfal ibn Khuwylid ibn Asad of Banû Asad who, though he tied 'Abû Bakr and Ṭalḥah together as punishment for their conversion, thus making them life-long comrades in conscience and sufferance, met his nemesis in the very early conversion of his own son, Al-Aswad ibn Nawfal, to Islam. These are only a few instances showing how clans and families were divided against themselves over the issue. Clearly the old pattern of rivalries and confrontation was unworkable in the situation.

The complexity of the situation naturally led to a complexity of manouevres and methods adopted by the opposition. Quite naturally they attempted to belittle and ignore the movement, even to silence it by taunting and ridiculing the Prophet. At the same time they applied more serious means, such as using force and torture upon those whom they could. They put various types of pressure upon Banû Hâshim and Banû al-Muṭṭalib to stop the Prophet. Sometimes they made offers of compromise, at other times they resolved to kill him and actually made several attempts to do so. Simultaneously, they used arguments and objections against him, levelled a number of allegation against him and also demanded that he perform miracles and other unusual feats. These manoeuvres and steps, it must be noted, do not constitute stages in the development of opposition; they rather indicate the itmes and types of antagonism resorted to by the leaders; for all these methods appear to have been adopted almost from the beginning.

So far as the task of the leaders with regard to themselves and their allies

was concerned, it was two-fold. They had, on the one hand, to make the clans, or rather their chiefs and heads of families, unite in opposition to the Prophet and his clan who, under the leadership of 'Abû Ṭâlib, stood solidly (except 'Abû Lahab) in protecting him (the Prophet). On the other hand the leaders had also to make the clans turn against those of their own members who embraced Islam; and that too not simply for punishing and torturing them but for disowning and excommunicating them; thus throwing them out of the pale of their respective clan-protection. In this latter process the leaders had per force to organize their opposition on a rather ideological line, i.e. on the issue of Islam which confronted them. In doing so they in effect helped undermine the very system they sought to uphold. For when men were told to subordinate their clan, family and even filial considerations to the cause of opposing an issue, they would be inevitably led on, in their heart of hearts, to making a comparative assessment of the issues they stood for and against. Like many other historical instituations and episodes, thus, the Makkan opposition contained in its bosom the germs of its own death.

The work of consolidating their ranks against their own renegades appears to have been accomplished by the leaders in the course of a little more then a year after the beginning of public propagation by the Prophet. In consequence of this development the converts from those very clans to which the leaders belonged found their position so insecure by the beginning of the fifth year of the mission that many of them, for the sake of survival, migrated to Abyssinia in the middle of that very year. On the other hand, the forging of such unity among themselves enabled the leaders to turn combinedly against Banû Hâshim and Banû al-Muṭṭalib as a whole. This they succeeded in doing by the end of the sixth year which resulted in the famous boycott and blockade of the latter at the end of the sixth or from the beginning of the seventh year. Before discussing these developments, it would be worthwhile to indicate the main causes of the opposition and its manners and manoeuvres.

(II) THE CAUSES OF OPPOSITION

Ibn Isḥâq's above mentioned statement[1] in fact alludes to the chief cause of the Makkan leaders' opposition to the Prophet's mission. They had built up their socio-religious and commercial life round the Ka'ba. It was on account of this shrine that Makka had indeed become the religious and com-

1. *Supra*, p. 610.

mercial centre of Arabia. The Makkan leaders, by virtue of their position as guardians of the Ka'ba, had obtained the position of priests and religious leaders of the Arabian tribes scattered throughout the land and had utilized that position to emerge as the commercial élite of Arabia. Makka itself and the different fairs and market-places in the neighbouring area prospered on account of the Ka'ba and the various religious ceremonies, including *ḥajj*, connected with it. Taking advantage of the long-standing rivalry and conflict between the Persian and the Byzantine (Eastern Roman) empires the Quraysh leaders of Makka had establised their position as the middle-man of the whole trade between the east and the west. They obtained from the south and the eastern Arabian ports the commodities coming from east Africa, India, China and the Far east and carried them to Syria and delivered them to the merchants of the Roman Empire. Similarly they obtained from the Syrian markets the commodities of the then known western world and carried them to the south and eastern Arabian ports whereform these were taken over by the Asian and African merchants. In order to carry on this lucrative trade the Quraysh leaders had established alliances with the Arabian tribes lying along the trade routes, sometimes paying them resonable considerations in the shape of presents and cash for their cooperation and support in ensuring the safe passage of the goods and caravans through their respective territories. A surer guarantee for their adhesion and alliance lay, however, in their religious ties with the Ka'ba and in the Quraysh leaders' position as its guardians.

When, therefore, they were asked to abandon the worship of the idols the Makkan leaders saw in it a threat to their position as the priestly class and guardians of the Ka'ba and, in consequence a threat also to their commercial and economic position. They apprehended that if they accepted the Prophet's call they would not only lose the adhesion of the tribes but, in all likelihood, would face a tribal coalition and revolt against them aiming at ousting them and installing others as guardians of the Ka'ba. The Makkan leaders thus feared the loss of their trade, their socio-religious position and even their domicile at and dominion over Makka, the religious and commercial centre of all Arabia.

They did not in fact make any secret of this apprehension of theirs. When 'Abû Lahab stated at the Prophet's first banquet that Banû Hâshim and the other Quraysh clans were not in a position to face the cambined opposition

of all the tribes of Arabia, he really voiced this apprehension of the Makkan leaders. The Qur'an also clearly refers to this apprehension on their part as follows: ﴿وقالوا إن نتبع الهدى معك نتخطف من أرضنا﴾

"And they say, if we followed the guidance with you , we would be ousted (snatched away) from our land ..." (28:57)

The Qur'ân did of course point out that the apprehension was groundless, for it was Allah who had indeed given the Ka'ba its position and by means of it the position the Quraysh clans enjoyed. Thus the concluding part of the above-quoted *'âyah* states:

﴿أولم نمكن لهم حرما ءامنا يجبى إليه ثمرات كل شيء رزقا من لدنا ولـٰكن أكثرهم لا يعملون﴾

"...Have We not established for them a secure sanctuary (i.e. Ka'ba) to which are brought the fruits (profits) of all things, as provision from Us? But most of them do not understand."

It was clearly to allay such apprehension on the part of the Quraysh leaders that the Prophet is found to have sometimes specifically mentioned that if they accepted the truth they, instead of losing their position, would indeed become masters of all Arabia and of the destiny of the Persian and Roman empires.

Another equally important reason for their opposition lay in their way of life. For centuries the Arab tribes, particularly their leaders, had been accustomed to a life of unbridled freedom and license without any well-defined rules of responsibility except for certain vaguely understood and loosely followed tribal customs and values. Licentiousness, fornication, adultery, murder, robbery, deception and unconscionable bargains in busness, ill-treatment of the poor, the weak and orphan, burying alive of female children, and the like, were of common occurrence and the only redress against such offences lay in tribal vengeance. As against these the Messenger of Allah called the Arabs to a reformed life and a new system of society and social relationship based on a divinely communicated code of conduct and a Book of guidance. It enjoined individual responsibility for each major and minor act, prescriped punishments for them not only in this world but also before Allah on a final day of judgement when each individual would be raised after his death. It further emphasized that this worldly life was not the be-all and end-all of human existence, but that there is an eternal life after death when each individual's position in that life would be determined in the light of his acts in this world. The teachings of Islam thus meant a revo-

lutionary transformation of the prevailing society and social relationship which it was not easy for the clan leaders to accept. Its acceptance meant an abandonment of the centuries-old traditional life. Their opposition to Islam was thus at bottom a conflict between the spirit of unbridled freedom and license on the one hand and the principle of the rule of law and constitution providing freedom with responsibility on the other. It was for this reason as also for the reason mentioned in the previous pragraphs that the conservative clan leaders, though not quite unaware of the concept of Allah as the Supreme Lord, refused to abandon the idols and to accept the divinely ordained code. Their attitude is best illustrated by the fact that at a certain stage of their opposition they even agreed to accept the personal leadership of the Prophet, recognizing him as their ruler and king but not to accept Islam and the Book. For, acceptance of only the personal leadership of the Prophet did not involve the abandonment of the traditional way of life and the matter would end with the end of the latter's life. But acceptance of Islam, the code of conduct contained in a divinely revealed Book which will continue to exist and demand adherence to it, was quite a different matter. Not for nothing did the Quraysh leaders sometimes say : "...We will never believe in this Qur'an, nor in that which came before it."[1] Clearly, their objection was not simply to what the Prophet was giving out to them, but to any sort of a written code of conduct.

Closely related to the above mentioned cause was the leaders' fear of losing their position of leadership and supremacy in the society and their pride and arrogance born out of that position. The clan and tribe leaders looked upon themselves as the ones who issued commands and were followed and not as ones who followed others. Acceptance of Islam meant, however, the virtual reversal of that position and necessitated obedience to the Messenger of Allah as the divinely appointed leader in all affairs of life. The Quraysh leaders found it difficult to accept that altered position, especially in respect of a person who had been born and brought up among them, who had not yet crossed the age of youth and who, moreover, had not hitherto been a wealthy and influential individual in the society. The Quraysh leaders had of course once proposed to accept the Prophet as their leader, as mentioned above, but that was conditional upon his abandoning his mission and was only a

1. 34:31. See for instance Al-Qurṭubî, *Tafsîr,* XIV, p. 302. The text runs as follows:

﴿وقال الذين كفروا لن نؤمن بهـذا القرءان ولا بالذى بين يديه ...﴾

manoeuvre on their part to save themselves the revolutionary transformation of society which Islam aimed at. In fact, underlying their whole attitude was their pride of affluence, man-power and traditional social position that made them arrogant and prevented them from accepting the truth even though they seemed to realize it. The Qur'ân makes frequent references to this arrogance on their part. "Never did We send a warner to a habitation", says 34:34-35, "but that its leading ones said: "We disbelieve in what you have been sent with. And they said: "We have more in wealth and sons, and we shall not be punished."[1] "As to those who do not believe in the hereafter", says another passage,"their hearts refuse (to know the truth), and they are arrogant."[2] "Woe to every sinful falsehood-monger who hears the signs of Allah recited to him, then obstinately persists in arrogance, as if he had not heard them. So give him the good tidings of a painful punsihment."[3] "And when Our signs are recited to him, he turns away arrogantly."[4] "They (previously) swore their strongest oaths by Allah that if a warner came to them they would certainely be the more guided than any other people; but when a warner did come to them, it only increased them in estrangement, on account of their arrogance in the land and plotting of evil..."[5]

Another substantial reason with some of the leaders for their opposition was their spirit of clan rivalry. This was particularly so with 'Abû Jahl of Banû Makhzûm. There was a long-standing rivalry between Banu Hâshim (Banû 'Âbd Manâf) and Banû Makhzûm for leadership, centring mainly round the various rights and duties connected with the Ka'ba. The emergence of the Messenger of Allah from Banû Hâshim was viewed by 'Abû Jahl in the light of this rivalry and he made no secret of it. It is reported that once when he and two other leaders, 'Abû Sufyân and Sharîq ibn Akhnâs,

1. The Arabic text runs as follows:

﴿ وما أرسلنا في قرية من نذير إلا قال مترفوها إنا بما أرسلتم به كـفرون * وقالوا نحن أكثر أموالا وأولـدا وما نحن بمعذبين ﴾ (٣٤: ٣٤-٣٥)

2. 16:22. The text runs as follows: ﴿ ... فالذين لا يؤمنون بالآخرة قلوبهم منكرة وهم مستكبرون ﴾ (١٦: ٢٢)

3. 45:7-8. The text runs as follows:

﴿ ويل لكل أفاك أثيم * يسمع ءايـت الله تتلىٰ عليه ثم يصرّ مستكبرا كأن لم يسمعها فبشره بعذاب أليم ﴾ (٤٥: ٧-٨)

4. 31:7. The text runs as follows: ﴿ وإذا تتلىٰ عليه ءايـتنا ولىٰ مستكبرا ... ﴾ (٣١: ٧)

5. 35:42-43. The text runs as follows:

﴿ وأقسموا بالله جهد أيمـنهم لـئن جاءهم نذير ليكونن أهدىٰ من إحدى الأمم فلما جاءهم نذير ما زادهم إلا نفورا * استكبارا في الأرض ومكر السيء ... ﴾ (٣٥: ٤٢-٤٣)

See also Q. 34:31-33 and 40:47-48 cited above (*supra*, pp. 609-610), 40:56 and 6:123; 7:36; 39:59-60; 45:31 and 104:1-3.

had returned home after having stealthily listened to the Prophet's recitation of the Qur'ân at night, the last named person (i.e. Sharîq ibn Akhnâs) went to 'Abû Jahl and privately asked him about his opinion regarding what he had heard. He replied indignantly: "What have I heard? We have been competing with Banû 'Abd Manâf for honour and leadership. They fed people; we also fed people. They helped others with means of transport, we also did so. They gave in charity, we also gave in charity; so much so that we became shoulder to shoulder like two running horses in a race. They now say: 'We have a Prophet from among us, to whom revelations come from heaven!' Now, how could we have this? By God, we shall never believe in it, nor treat it as true."[1] A somewhat similar spirit of clan rivalry determined the attitude of the leaders of Banû 'Umayyah also.

Last but not least, tribal conservatism and attachment to tradition was onother important reason for the opposition. The leaders often raised the slogan for maintaining and continuing the religion of their forefathers and decried the implication that the latter were mistaken or unwise in their beliefs and practices and were as such suffering in the hell-fire. While this sentiment was general among the mass of the population, the leaders made use of it to incite them against the Messenger of Allah. The Qur'ân refers to this attitude of theirs in a number of passages. Some of them run as follows:

﴿وإذا تتلىٰ عليهم ءايـٰتنا بينـٰت قالوا ما هـٰذا إلا رجل يريد أن يصدكم عمّا كان يعبد ءاباؤكم...﴾ (٤٣:٣٤)

"When our clear signs are recited to them they say: ' This is naught but a man who intends to prevent you from worshipping what your fathers (ancestors) used to worship.'" (34:43)

﴿بل قالوا إنا وجدنآ ءابآءنا علىٰ أمة وإنا علىٰ ءاثـٰرهم مهتدون * وكذٰلك مآ أرسلنا من قبلك فى قرية من نذير إلا قال مترفوهآ إنا وجدنآ ءابآءنا علىٰ أمة و إنا علىٰ ءاثـٰرهم مقتدون﴾ (٤٣:٢٢-٢٣)

"Nay', they said: 'we found our feathers following a certain religion and we do guide ourselves by their footsteps.' Similarly, whenever We sent a warner before you to any habitation, the affluent ones of it said: 'We found our fathers following a certain religion, and we will surely follow in their footsteps.'" (43:22-23)

﴿وإذا قيل لهم اتبعوا مآ أنزل الله قالوا بل نتبع ما وجدنا عليه ءابآءنا . . .﴾ (٣١:٢١)

"And when it is said to them:' Follow what Allah has sent down', they say: 'Nay, we

1. Ibn Hishâm, 315-316. The same and other similar remarks by 'Abû Jahl on other occasions are also reported. See for instance Ibn Kathîr, *Tafsîr*, III, pp. 245-247 and Al-Ṭabarî, *Tafsîr*, XI, pp. 332-333.

shall follow that on which we found our fathers'..." (31:21).[1]

For all these reasons the Makkan leaders ranged themselves against the Messenger of Allah and Islam. Their chief manoeuvres and methods are mentioned below.

III. THE IMMEDIATE ALLEGATIONS AND SARCASM

(a) The allegation of madness and of straying from the right course: One of the earliest manoeuvres of the opposition was an attempt to discredit the Prophet and to alienate the people from him by dubbing him as one who had gone off his head and had strayed from the right course of conduct. Various terms were employed for the purpose, such as *majnûn* (mad or one possessed by a *jinn* or evil spirit), *maftûn* (maniac or one who had gone off his head), *mashûr* (betwitched or under the spell of sorcery), etc. These expressions were more or less coterminous; for madness, according to the prevailing Arab notion, was essentially the result of the influence of an evil spirit (a wicked *jinn*) or of the spell of sorcery. Closely related to this allegation was the allegation that the Prophet had strayed from the right and traditional course of conduct and had been misguided. "And they say:", points out the Qur'an, "O you on whom the recital has been sent down, you indeed are mad." (15:6) = ﴿وقالوا يـٰأيها الذى نزّل عليه الذكر إنك لمجنون﴾ (١٥ : ٦)

"Behold the transgressors say: "You follow none but a man bewitched." (17:47)= ﴿...إذ يقول الظـٰلمون إن تتبعون إلا رجلا مسحورا﴾ (١٧ : ٤٧)

"And the unbelievers almost smite you with their looks when they hear the recital (Qur'ân), and say: ' Verily he is mad." (68:51)=

﴿وإن يكاد الذين كفروا ليُزلقُونك بأبصـٰرهم لَمَّا سمعوا الذِّكر ويقولون إنه لَمجنون﴾ (٦٨ : ٥١)

The combination of the unbelievers' stern look with their ascription of madness to the Prophet, as described in the last passage, indicates that their allegation in this instance was more an outcome of their astonishment and disapproval than of their conviction that he was really mad. In any case the Qur'ân refers to this allegation on the unbelievers' part at a number of places[2] by way of denying and refuting it as well as by way of reassuring the Messenger of Allah of the sublimity of his character and conduct. The allegations were so manifestly absurd and so evidently belied by the soundness of his mind and consistency of his words and deeds both before and after his

1. See also Q. 16:35 and 6:148.
2. See also Q. 26:27; 37:36 and 44:14.

call, as was clear to all those who knew him or came in contact with him, that no lengthy argument was needed to refute them. Hence the Qur'ân's denials are short and incisive. "Do they not reflect (a little)", says the Qur'ân, "that their companion is not afflicted with madness? He is but a clear warner". (70:184)= ﴿أولم يتفكروا ما بصاحبهم من جنّة إن هو إلا نذير مّبين﴾ (٧٠:١٨٤) "Or do they say: 'He is possessed'? Rather he has brought them the truth." (23:70) ﴿أم يقولون به جنّة بل جآءهم بالحق ...﴾ ٢٣:٧٠ [1]

Similarly, to the unbelievers' allegation that the Prophet had gone astray the Qur'an declares: "Your companion has not gone astray, nor is he misled." (53:2)= ﴿ما ضلّ صاحبكم وما غوىٰ﴾ "Verily it is your Lord Who knows best who has strayed from His path, and it is He Who knows best those who are on the path of guidance." (68:7 & 16:125)= ﴿إن ربك هو أعلم بمن ضل عن سبيله وهو أعلم بالمهتدين﴾ [2] "Say, if I have gone astray, then I stray only to the detriment of my own self; but if I have received guidance, then it is because of what my Lord communicates to me ..." (34:50)= ﴿ قل إن ضللت فإنما أضل على نفسي وإن اهتديت فبما يوحي إليّ ربّي ...﴾ The Qur'ân also points out more than once that such allegations of madness and insanity were hurled at the previous Prophets too. "Thus did no Messenger come to those before them but that they said: 'He is a sorcerer or one possessed (51:52)= ﴿كذٰلك مآ أتى الذين من قبلهم من رسول إلا قالوا ساحر أو مجنون﴾ [3] (٥١:٥٢)

(b) The allegation of being a sorcerer, a poet and a soothsayer: It would be seen from the last mentioned passage that the Prophet was called also a sorcerer. The shift from the allegation of his being under the spell of sorcery (*mashûr*) to his being himself a sorcerer (*sâḥîr*) was doubtless due to the persuasive quality and bewitching linguistic beauty of the texts of revelation he had been giving out. For, while the appellation of *sâḥir* (sorcerer) was being applied to him, the only unusual performance of his which could justify the description was the giving out of the texts of the revelation. And it was these that were often characterized by his opponents as *siḥr* (magic or sorcery). The Qur'ân's reference to this allegation of the unbelievers is equally clear. "Is it a matter of wonderment to men", it says, "that we have sent Our revelation to a man from among themselves?....(But) the unbelievers say: 'This

1. Similar in terms are Q. 23:25; 34:8; 34:46; 52:29; 68;2 and 81:22.
2. Almost similar in wording is Q. 6:117.
3. See also Q. 23:25; 26:27; 51:39.

(man) is indeed an evident sorcerer.'" (10:2)=

﴿أكان للناس عجبا أن أوحينآ إلىٰ رجل منهم .... قال الكـٰفرون إن هذا لسـٰحر مبين﴾

"And they wonder that a warner has come to them from amongst themselves. And the unbelievers say, this is a sorcerer, telling lies!" (38:4)=

﴿وعجبوا أن جآءهم منذر منهم و قال الكـٰفرون هـٰذا سـٰحر كذاب﴾ (٣٨ : ٤)

"So when the truth came to them from Us they said: 'This indeed is evident sorcery." (10:76)= ﴿فلما جآءهم الحق من عندنا قالوا إن هـٰذا لسحر مبين﴾.

"And when the truth came to them, they said: 'This is sorcery and we reject it." (43:30)= ﴿ولما جآءهم الحق قالوا هـٰذا سحر وإنا به كـٰفرون﴾ [1]

The reference to the allegation of the Prophet's being a poet is no less emphatic. "And they say: 'Are we to give up our gods for the sake of a poet , one possessed?" (37:36)= ﴿ويقولون أئـنا لتاركوا ءالهتنا لشاعر مجنون﴾ (٣٧ : ٣٦)

"We have not taught him versifying, nor is it appropriate for him. This (revelation) is but a recital, a Qur'ân, evident and clear!" (36:69)=

﴿وما علّمنـٰه الشعر وما ينبغي له، إن هو إلا ذكر و قرءان مبين﴾

"Therefore proclaim (Allah's praises); for you are not by your Lord's grace a soothsayer, nor one possessed. Or do they say, 'A poet! We await a calamity for him in the course of time.' Say: 'You wait; I too, along with you, am of those awaiting." (52:29-31)

﴿فذكر فمآ أنت بنعمة ربك بكاهن ولا مجنون * أم يقولون شاعر نتربّص به ريب المنون * قل تربّصوا فإنى معكم من المتربّصين﴾ (٥٢ : ٢٩-٣١)

The Qur'an very categorically declares: "And it is *not* the saying of a poet; little do you believe; nor the saying of a soothsayer; little do you take admonition. (It is) something sent down from the Lord of all the worlds." (69:41-43)=

﴿وما هو بقول شاعر قليلا مّا تؤمنون * ولا بقول كاهن قليلا مّا تذكرون * تنزيل من ربّ العـٰلمين﴾ (٦٩ : ٤١-٤٣)

The Qur'ân also points out the characteristics of a poet in contrardistinction to those of a Prophet.[2]

(c) *Ridicule and sarcasm:* Another method adopted by the Prophet's opponents was taunting him and the Muslims, holding them up to public

1. See also Q. 10:76; 11:17; 21:5; 27:13; 34:43; 37:15; 46:7; 54:2; 61:6 and 74:24.
2. Q. 26:224-226.

ridicule and scoffing at the various teachings of Islam, particularly the idea of resurrection, judgement and life after death. The sources specifically mention the following persons as the principal ridiculers of the Prophet and the Muslims.[1]

1. Al-Walid ibn al-Mughîrah (of Banû Makhzûm)
2. Al-Aswad ibn al-Muṭṭalib 'Abû Zam'ah (of Banû Asad)
3. Al-Aswad ibn 'Abd Yaghûth ibn Wahb (of Banû Zuhrah)

(This man was the Prophet's maternal cousin)

4. Al-Ḥârith ibn Qays (also called Ibn al-'Anṭalah or 'Aiṭalah, of Banû Sahm)
5. Al-'Âṣ ibn al-Wâ'il (of Banû sahm)

Besides these persons 'Abû Lahab, Al-Ḥakam ibn Abî al-'Âṣ and Mâlik ibn al-Ṭalâṭilah ibn Ghabshân also are mentioned as prominent ridiculers.[2]

Initially, the Prophet's modest position in the society was made a point of attack and mockery by the unbelievers."When they see you", states the Qur'ân, "they treat you but in mockery (saying): ' Is this the one whom Allah has sent as a Messenger? He would indeed have misled us from our gods, had we not patiently adhered to them..."[3] The unenvinable position of some of the converts who usually remained in attendance on the Prophet was similarly scoffed at. "Those in sin used to laugh at those who believed. And whenever they passed by them, used to wink at each other (in mockery). And when they returned to their own people, they would return jesting. And whenever they saw them, they would say, 'Verily these people have gone astray'."[4]

The most common item of their ridicule was the idea of resurrection and final judgement. "And those who disbelieve say (in ridicule): 'Shall we show you the man who imforms you that when you were completely disintegrated

1. See for instance Al-Ṭabarî, *Tafsîr,* XIV, pp. 69-70, 71-72.

2. See *Subul al-Hudâ,* II, Cairo, 1394 H.,p. 608 and Al-Balâdhurî, *'Ansâb al-'Ashrâf,* I.,p. 154.

3. Q. 25:41-42. =

﴿ وإذا رأوك إن يتخذونك إلا هزوا أهذا الذي بعث الله رسولا * إن كاد ليضلنا عن ءالهتنا لولآ أن صبرنا عليها . . . ﴾

4. Q. 83:29-32 =

﴿ إن الذين أجرموا كانوا من الذين ءامنوا يضحكون * وإذا مرّوا بهم يتغامزون * وإذا انقلبوا إلى أهلهم انقلبوا فكهين * وإذا رأوهم قالوٓا إن هـٰؤلآء لضآلون ﴾

into pieces you will be created anew. He has indeed fabricated a lie against God, or is he under the spell of a spirit?..."[1]

"And they used to say: 'What! When we died and became dust and bones, would we really be raised up again? And our forfathers of old?"[2] It is reported that 'Umayyah ibn Khalaf or Al-'Âṣ ibn Wâ'il one day came to the Prophet with a piece of rotten bone, pressed it into dust between the hands and after blowing it towards the Prophet asked him whether he wanted to say that God would revive that bone and its original possessor into life. The Prophet replied in the affirmative. With reference to this incident 36:77-79 was revealed. It says:

﴿أولم يرَ الإنسـٰن أنا خلقنـٰه من نطفة فإذا هو خصيم مبين * وضرب لنا مثلا و نسيَ خلقه قال من يُحي العظـٰم وهي رميم * قل يحييـها الذى أنشأهآ أول مرة و هو بكل خلق عليم﴾ (٣٦:٧٧-٧٩)

"Does not man see that it is We Who created him from a drop? Yet lo! he is an open disputant. And he strikes an instance for Us, and he forgets his (own) creation. He says: 'Who can bring the bone into life when it is decomposed?' Say: 'He Who created it for the first time will bring it into life (again); and He is the Omniscient of all the processes of creation."[3]

A good deal of the Qur'ân is indeed devoted to bringing home the theme of resurrection and judgement.

Another person, Al-Ḥârith ibn Qays (no.4 above) used to remark that Muḥammad (ﷺ) had indeed deceived himself and his companions by promising them that they would be raised up after their death. The fact is that, he used to stress, that all men are destroyed only by the passage of time.[4] A more heinous joke was cut by Al-'Aṣ ibn Wâ'il. He had some swords made by Kahbbâb ibn al-Aratt, who was a swords-smith by profession and who was one of the earliest converts to Islam. Al-'Âṣ did not pay him the price of the swords and when he asked for it, told him tauntingly that when both of them were resurrected after death, he (Al-'Âṣ) would pay it, adding that as he was in a far better material position in this world he would naturally be in the same position in the hereafter.[5] The two Aswads

1. Q. 34:7-8 =
﴿وقال الذين كفروا هل ندلكم على رجل ينبئكم إذا مزقتم كل ممزق إنكم لفى خلق جديد * أفترى على الله كذبا أم به جنة ...﴾
2. Q. 56:47 = ﴿وكانوا يقولون أئـذا متنا وكنا ترابا وعظمـا أءنا لمبعوثون * أوَ ءاباؤنا الأولون﴾
3. See for instance Al-Ṭabarî, *Tafsîr*, pt. XXIII, pp. 30-31.
4. *Subul al-Hudâ, op.cit*, III, 696.
5. *Bukhârî, Kitâb al-Tafsîr*, no. 4732, and *Kitâb al-Ijârah*, no. 2275.

(nos. 2&3) used to tell their companions, when passing by the Muslims who were of small means, that they were then seeing the people who would be successors to the Roman and Persian empires and their treasures![1]

Such scoffing and ridiculing on the unbelievers' part, particularly their imputation of lying on the Prophet's part pained him very much. There are a number of passages in the Qur'ân wherein Allah comforts and consoles him and advises him to persevere and have patience. "And have patience over what they say and avoid them in a dignified manner. And leave Me (to deal with) and the deniers (of the truth) possessing fortunes; and bear with them for a while." (73:10-11)= ﴿واصبر على ما يقولون واهجرهم هجرا جميلا * وذرني والمكذبين أولى النعمة ومهلهم قليلا﴾

"Verily we suffice you against the deriders." (15:95)= ﴿إنا كفينـك المستهزءين﴾ "We know indeed that what they say grieves you. They do not (really) belie you (as a person), but the transgressors in fact reject the signs of Allah (i.e. the revelation)." (6:33)= ﴿ قد نعلم إنه ليحزنك الذى يقولون فإنهم لا يكذّبونك ولكن الظـلمين بـايـت الله يجحدون﴾

The Prophet is further told: "And the messengers before you too had been (similarly) dubbed as liars but they bore with patience the imputation of lying and were wronged till Our aid (and victory) came to them. Nothing can alter Allah's words (dispensation). There have already come to you some of the accounts of the (previous) messengers." (6:34)= ﴿ولقد كُذّبت رسل من قبلك فصبروا على ما كُذّبوا وأوذُوا حتىٰ ءاتـهم نصرنا ولا مبدّل لكلمـت الله ولقد جآءك من نبإىْ المرسلين﴾ (٣٤:٦)

Nothing could be a clearer promise by Allah for the Prophet's ultimate success. Earlier in the same *sûrah* the Prophet is told: "And there indeed had been mocked Messengers before you; but those who mocked were hemmed in by the very thing they had mocked at." (6:10)= ﴿ولقد استهزئ برسل من قبلك فحاق بالذين سخروا منهم ما كانوا به يستهزءون﴾ (١٠:٦) "Therefore let not their utterances grieve you. Surely We know what they conceal and what they disclose." (36:76)= ﴿فلا يحزنك قولهم إنا نعلم ما يسرّون وما يعلنون﴾[2]

1. Al-Balâdhurî, *Ansâb al-Ashrâf*, I, pp. 131-132; *Subul al-Hudâ, op.cit*, II, pp. 608.
2. See also Q. 10:65; 16:127; 27:70.

CHAPTER XXVI

ORGANIZED OPPOSITION: I. OBJECTIONS, ARGUMENTATION AND DEMAND FOR MIRACLES

The unbelieving Makkan leaders organized themselves for opposing the Prophet in a more serious way as soon as he began to preach the truth openly at public gatherings and assemblages. The Quraysh leaders realized that mere ridiculing him or calling him mad, a poet or a sorcerer would not do. Hence they thought of more serious objections and argumentation.

I. OBJECTION AND ARGUMENTATION

The most frequent objections centred round the question, how could a human being be appointed Allah's messenger? If Allah intented to send a messenger, why should an angel not have been despatched as such? Or, at least, why an angel should not have been attached as an assistant to or as a co-messenger with a human messenger? Then, if a man was after all to be Allah's messenger, why should Muḥammad (ﷺ) who had hitherto not been a prominent leader in the society and who lived a life of an ordinary individual with wife and children, conducting business, walking in the streets and markets, and eating and drinking like any other man — why should such an ordinary individual have been chosen as Allah's messenger? Why, instead, was not a prominent leader of either Makka or Ṭâif sent as Allah's messenger?

The unbelieving leaders asked these questions not for arriving at the truth but as points of propaganda to dissuade the common man from following the Prophet. The Qur'an is replete with references to such objections of the Makkan leaders. Some of the relevant passages run as follows:

(1) ﴿وقالوا مال هـٰـذا الرسول يأكل الطعام ويمشى فى الأسواق لولآ أنزل إليه ملك فيكون معه، نذيرا * أو يُلقىٰ إليه كنز أو تكون له جنة يأكل منها وقال الظـٰـلمون إن تتبعون إلا رجلا مسحورا﴾ (٢٥:٧-٨)

"And they said: 'What sort of a messenger is this, who eats food and walks in the market? Why has not an angel been sent down to him to become a warner along with him? Or, why has not a treasure been bestowed upon him, or a garden given to him, wherefrom he derives his provision?' And the transgressors said: 'You follow none but a man bewitched.'" (25:7-8)

(2) ﴿وقال الملأ من قومه الذين كفروا وكذبوا بلقآء الأخرة وأترفنـٰـهم فى الحيوٰة الدنيا ما هـٰـذا إلا بشر مثلكم يأكل مما تأكلون منه ويشرب مما تشربون * ولئن أطعتم بشرا مثلكم إنكم إذا لخـٰـسرون﴾ (٢٣:٣٣-٣٤)

"And the chiefs of his people who disbelieved and denied the meeting in the hereafter (i.e. Day of Judgement) and on whom We bestowed the good things of this life said: 'He is no more than a man like yourselves ; he eats of what you eat and drinks of what you drink. If you obeyed a man like yourselves you would be sure losers." (23:33-34)

(3) ﴿...وأسرّوا النّجوى الذين ظلموا هل هـٰـذا إلا بشر مّثلكم افتأتون السّحر و أنتم تبصرون﴾ (٢١:٣)

"...And they concealed their private consels — those who transgressed (saying): 'Is this exept a man like yourselves? Will you get into the sorcery while you see it?" (21:3)

(4) ﴿أءنزل عليه الذّكر من بيننا...﴾ (٣٨:٨)

"Has the recital (revelation) been sent down on him, of all of us?" (38:8)

(5) ﴿وقالوا لولا نزّل هـٰـذا القرءان على رجل من القريتين عظيم﴾ (٤٣:٣١)

"And they said: "Why is not this Qur'ân sent down to a leading man in either of the two towns (i.e. Makka and Ṭâ'if) ?" (43:31)

(6) ﴿وقال الذين كفروا للذين ءامنوا لو كان خيرا ما سبقونآ إليه...﴾

"And those who disbelieved said of those who believed: "Were it (the revelation) a good thing they would not have preceded us in accepting it..." (46:11)

The Qur'ân's (and therefore the Prophet's) replies to these objections were brief and to the point. Thus, with reference to the question of whether a human being could be Allah's messenger it was said that this was no novelty with Muḥammad (ﷺ); all the previous Prophets and Messengers were human beings, eating and drinking and conducting family life as well as engaging themselves in the affairs of the world. None of them was an immortal being. Also, each Prophet was raised from among the same people amidst whom he preached. In no case was he a stranger coming from an unknown place. Regarding the question why an angel was not sent as Allah's messenger it was pointed out that if the world was inhabited by angels, living and moving about there like human beings, an angel would have been sent as a messenger. Moreover, if an angel messenger was to be sent to human beings, he would in that case have been sent in the shape and form of human being, and that would have caused no less confusion. As regards the objection why a leading man of either Makka or Ṭâ'if was not sent as Allah's messenger, it was pointed out that in saying so the unbelieving leaders did not mean that in that case they would have believed. Rather, their objection on this count was only an expression of their scepticism about Allah's revelation. Moreover, prophethood and revelation are Allah's special favours; He

knows best on whom to bestow them. The unbelieving leaders were neither the owners of those favours, nor could they arrogate to themselves the right to apportion them according to their likes and dislikes. Some of the Qur'ânic passages containing these replies are as follows:

(1) ﴿قل ما كنت بدعا من الرسل...﴾ (٤٦: ٩)

"Say: 'I am no novelty in being of the messengers..." (46:9)

(2) ﴿ومآ أرسلنا قبلك إلا رجالا نوحىٓ إليهم فسئلوٓا أهل الذكر إن كنتم لا تعلمون * وما جعلنـٰهم جسدا لا يأكلون الطعام وما كانوا خـٰلدين﴾ (٢١: ٧-٨)

"We did not commission as messengers before you anyone exept men, sending revelation to them. Ask the people of the scripture if you do not know this. Nor did We make them of bodies that ate no food; nor were they exempt from death." (21:7-8) [1]

(3) ﴿و مآ أرسلنا من قبلك إلا رجالا نوحىٓ إليهم من أهل القرىٓ...﴾ (١٢: ١٠٩)

"Nor did We despatch messengers before you, sending revelation on them, except men from among the people of the same habitations..." (12:109)

(4) ﴿وما منع الناس أن يؤمنوٓا إذ جآءهم الهدىٰ إلآ أن قالوٓا أبعث الله بشرا رسولا * قل لو كان فى الأرض ملـٰٓئكة يمشون مطمئنين لنزلنا عليهم من السمآء ملكا رسولا﴾ (١٧: ٩٤-٩٥)

"It did not prevent men from believing when the guidance came to them except that they said (wondered): 'Has Allah sent a man as messenger?' Say: 'If there were angels on the earth moving about contentedly there, We would surely have sent down from the heavens an angel as a messenger." (17:94-95)

(5) ﴿ولو جعلنـٰه ملكا لجعلنـٰه رجلا وللبسنا عليهم ما يلبسون﴾

"And if We made an angel a messenger (unto human beings) , We would have shaped him as a man and thereby would have surely confused them about which they are in confusion." (6:9)

(4) ﴿أهم يقسمون رحمت ربك نحن قسمنا بينهم معيشتهم فى الحيوٰة الدنيا ورفعنا بعضهم فوق بعض درجـٰت ليتخذ بعضهم بعضا سخريا و رحمت ربك خير مما يجمعون﴾

"Is it they who distribute the mercy of your Lord? It is We Who have apportioned among them their livelihood in the life of this world and have raised some of them above others in ranks, that some may take others in service; but the mercy of your lord (i.e. the special mercy of Prophethood and revelation) is better than what they amass." (43:32)

This last *'âyah* is in reply to the unbelievers' obejection, mentioned in the *'âyah* preceding it (43:31), as to why a leading man of Makka or Ṭâ'if was not commissioned as Allah's massenger.

1. See also Q. 13:38.

The unbelievers raised objections also against the nature of Qur'ân, denying its revelation by Allah. Thus, besides calling the Prophet a poet, a *kâhin* (soothsayer) and *sâḥir* (magician) they accused him of his having himself fabricated or composed the texts and also alleged that he was taught or instructed by another person or persons, that someone else had dictated the texts to him or written them for him which he committed to memory and gave out as revelations. These aspects of their objections have already been dealt with.[1]

It may be observed that the various objections and allegations of the unbelievers were not only untrue and untenable but also inconsistent and contradictory. Thus, if the Prophet had been mad or insane, as alleged, he could not have been a poet or a soothsayer; if he was a poet, he could not have been a soothsayer or a sorcerer, for the utterances of the latter were very much different from the nature of compositions a poet was wont to make. Again, if the Prophet himself had facbricated or composed the texts of the Qur'ân, it would be illogical to say that someone else had dictated the texts to him or had written them for him; and if someone had done that for him, it would have been impossible for him to claim Allah's messengership and reciept of revelation from Him without running the risk of being exposed and contradicted by those alleged helpers. In fact, with reference to such inconsistencies of the unbelievers the Qur'ân very pithily points out to the Prophet: "Look! How they strike similitudes for you! Thus they go astray and cannot find a way." (17:48)=

﴿انظر كيف ضربوا لك الأمثال فضلوا فلا يستطيعون سبيلا﴾

"Rather they denied the truth when it came to them. Hence they were in a confused state." (50:5)= ﴿بل كذبوا بالحق لما جآءهم فهم في أمر مريج﴾

The various objections of the unbelievers and the Qur'ânic replies to them also illustrate the fact that the revelations were given out to the people as soon as they came to the Prophet. Indeed, it would have been meaningless to withhold the revelations from the public for any length of time, for a good deal of them were revealed on the occasion of or in relation to the unbelievers' objections.

The Quraysh leaders did not stop by making only the above-mentioned objections. They also put a number of questions to the Prophet and sought

1. *Supra*, pp. 265-274, 621-622.

the opinions of those who were better informed than they to ascertain the genuineness of his claim. It is reported that the Quraysh leaders sent two of their men, Al-Naḍr ibn Al-Ḥârith and 'Uqbah ibn Abî Mu'ayṭ, to the Jewish rabbis at Madina to ask their opinion about the Prophet.[1] The two men went there, gave the rabbis a description of the Prophet and his activities and asked their opinion about him. In reply they suggested to the Quraysh delegates that they test the Prophet by asking him about three things, namely, about "the group of young men with a strange story" (i.e. *'Aṣḥâb al-Kahf*, people of the cave), "the world traveller" (i.e. *Dhû al-Qarnayn*) and about *al-Rûḥ* (spirit, soul), adding that if he gave correct replies to these questions, he was a genuine Prophet; if not, he was an imposter. The two men returned to Makka and informed the leaders about the rabbis' suggestions. Accordingly the Quraysh leaders went to the Prophet and asked him about the three subjects. He promised to give them a reply on the following day, without adding "If Allah wishes" (*in shâ' Allah*). It so happened that no *waḥy* came to him for a couple of weeks. This made him very sad while the Quraysh leaders did not fail to exploit the situation and starting taunting the Prophet for having failed to give them a reply as he had promised. At the end of some two weeks, however, *sûrat al-Kahf* (No18) was revealed to him. It contained a description and the replies on the subjects. The 23rd and 24th *'âyahs* of the *sûrah* contained also a mild rebuke for the Prophet for his having forgotten to add *in shâ 'Allah* when he promised a reply to the Quraysh leaders.[2] The replies given to the questions did not of course satisfy the latter who continued their opposition as before.

II. DEMAND FOR MIRACLES AND UNUSUAL FEATS

Closely related to their argumentation was the unbelievers' demand for the performance of miracles and other unusual feats by the Prophet.[3] As in the case of their objections, this demand for miracles also was made not with a view to seeking the truth but with the hostile intention of ridiculing and discomfiting the Prophet. They asked the Prophet from time to time to per-

1. Ibn Hishâm, I, 300-308. See also Al-Qurṭubî, *Tafsîr*, X, 346 ff.
2. See Al-Ṭabarî, *Tafsîr*, pt.XV, p. 228; Al-Qurṭubî, *Tafsîr*, X, pp. 384-385.
3. See for instance Q. 6:37; 6:124; 13:7 and 29:50

form various types of miracles, as was done by some of the previous Prophets. Ibn Isḥâq gives the repport of Ibn 'Abbâs about one occasion which says that on one evening, after sun-set, the Quraysh leaders, 'Utbah and Shaybah, sons of Rabî'ah, Abû Sufyân ibn Ḥarb, Al-Naḍr ibn al-Ḥârith, 'Abû al-Bakhtarî ibn Hishâm, Al-Aswad ibn al-Muṭṭalib ibn Asad, Zam'ah ibn al-Aswad, Al-Walîd ibn al-Mughîrah, 'Abû Jahl, 'Abd Allâh ibn 'Abî 'Umayyah, Al-'Âṣ ibn Wâ'il, Nubayh and Munabbih, sons of Al-Ḥajjâj, Umayyah ibn Khalaf and others assembled in the Ka'ba compound and sent for the Prophet in order to talk to him and to settle the affair with him. The Prophet, thinking that the leaders might have been inclined to listening to the message of Islâm, instantly presented himself before them. As he came to them they addressed him first by accusing him of his having abused their religion, gods and forefathers, caused dissension in the society and set at naught their aims and ambitions. They then told him that if in doing so his intention was to gain honour and position in the society and to amass wealth, they were ready to offer him as much wealth as would make him the wealthiest man in Makka, to accept him as their leader and even to make him their king, if only he abandoned his mission. Or, if he was suffering from any mental ailment, they would make all efforts and would expend their wealth in procuring a suitable treatment for him. To these proposals the Prophet calmly replied that it was none of his intention to attain wealth and position, nor was he suffering from any aliment. He was but a Messenger of Allah, with a book revealed to him, to warn them against Allah's retribution if they persisted in their wrong path and to give them the good tidings of His rewards and favours if they adopted a reformed life, adding that it would be their good fortune if they accepted Allah's message and his advice; if not, he would wait patiently till Allah decided between him and them.[1]

Thereupon the Quraysh leaders told him that if he did not accept their proposals he should at least do a favour to them. They said that there was no country like theirs wherein life was harder, with no plain land and no water. If he was truly Allah's messenger, he should ask his Lord to remove the bare hills and mountains from the land, transform it into plain fields, causing rivers and springs to gush forth therein, as in Syria and Iraq. He should also ask his Lord to resurrect their dead ancestors, particularly their great Shaykh

1. Ibn Hishâm, 295-298/ Ibn Isḥâq, *Al-Siyar wa al-Maghâzî,* 197-199 Ibn Kathîr, *Al-Bidâyah wa al-Nihâyah,* I, 49-51. *Tafsîr,* V, 115-117.

Quṣayy ibn Kilâb, so that they could testify in the Prophet's favour and thus they be convinced of his position as truly Allah's messenger. At this the Prophet said that he was not commissioned by Allah to perform those deeds, but only to deliver His message to them. He repeated that it would be their good fortune if they accepted the message; if not, he would patiently wait till Allah decided between him and them.[1]

The Quraysh leaders next told the Prophet that if he was not willing to do them the favour they asked for, he should at least ask his Lord to better his own position and to relieve him of the need for earning his own livelihood by going about in the markets like any other individual. He should ask Allah to provide him with fruit orchards, palaces and treasures of gold and silver, commensurate with his position as Allah's Messenger. The Prophet replied that he would never ask Allah for all those things, nor was he sent for that purpose. He was simply a warner and giver of good tidings. If they accepted the message, he reiterated, it would be their good fortune; if not, he would wait patiently till Allah decided between him and them.[2]

Persisting in their obstinacy the Quraysh leaders next told the Prophet that they would never believe in him unless he caused the sky to fall in pieces upon them, as he claimed Allah could do by way of retribution. To this statement the Prophet replied that that was up to Allah, if he willed so to deal with them, He could do it to them. Thereupon the Quraysh leaders tauntingly questioned him: Did his Lord not know that they would be sitting with him and asking him all that they had asked, and informed him in advance what he should tell them and what he would do to them if they did not accept what he had brought to them? They added that they had indeed come to know that a man of Al-Yamâmah named Al-Raḥmân prompted him (the Prophet) and told him that they would never believe in Al-Raḥmân. "We have thus rebutted all your pretensions, O Muḥammad", they told him in fine, "and we shall never let you alone with what you have done to us, until you destroy us, or we destroy you."[3]

As the Prophet then stood up to leave them, 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abî 'Umayyah ibn al-Mughîrah, who was a cousin of the Prophet's, being a son of 'Atîkah bint 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, stood up with him and addressed him thus:" O Muḥammad, your people made certain proposals to you but you did not accept them. Next they asked you to perform some deeds whereby they could be sure of your position in relation to Allah, as you claim, and believe

1. *Ibid.* 2. *Ibid.* 3. *Ibid.*

you and follow you. You did not do that. Then they asked you to obtain for yourself something whereby they could know your distinction and primacy over them and your position with Allah. You did not do it. They then asked you to hasten upon them some of the retributions wherewith you threaten them; but you did not do even that. By Allah, I will never believe in you unless you take a ladder and climb into the sky, while I look on, and then return with a complete book along with four angels who would testify that you are what you say you are. Even then I think I should not believe you." With this remark 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abi 'Umayyah left him and the Prophet returned to his family with a dejected mind for the leaders' refusal to accept the truth and their estrangement from him.[1]

The Qur'ân refers to such demands of the unbelievers in a number of passages, particularly in 17:90-93 which runs as follows:

﴿وقالوا لن نؤمن لك حتىٰ تفجُر لنا من الأرض ينبوعا * أو تكون لك جنّة من نخيل وعنب فتُفجّر الأنهـٰر خلـٰلها تفجيرا * أو تسقط السمآء كما زعمت علينا كسفا أو تأتي بالله والملـٰـٓئكة قبيلا * أو يكون لك بيت من زخرف أو ترقىٰ في السمآء ولن نؤمن لرقيك حتىٰ تنزل علينا كتـٰبا نقرؤه قل سبحان ربى هل كنت إلا بشرا رسولا﴾ (١٧: ٩٠-٩٣)

"And they said: 'We shall never believe you until you cause a spring to gush forth for us from the earth or there comes into existence for you a garden of date-palms and grape vines wherein you cause rivers to burst forth and flow in streams; or you cause the sky to fall in pieces upon us (as punishment) as you assert; or bring Allah and the angels face to face with us; or there comes into existence for you an ornamented house of gold, or you go up into the sky, and (even then) we shall not believe in your going up till you bring down on us a (solid) book we can read (from).' Say: ' Glory to my Lord. Am I aught but a human being, a messenger?"

The passage is graphic enough to enable us to understand the nature of the unbelievers' demands even without reference to the report mentioned above. More remarkable is the reply given to their demands. It emphasizes that the Prophet was no more than a human being, only commissioned with divine message but claiming no divine attribute nor any supernatural power. It also underscores the peculiar nature of the unbelievers' notion of a Prophet or Messenger of Allah.

The above quoted passage also shows that the unbelievers even demanded that Allah Himself should appear before them to testify to the truth of the Prophet's claim. This demand was similar to what some of

1. *Ibid.*

Prophet Mûsâ's community said: "...We shall never believe you until we see Allah manifestly." (2:55)= ﴿...لن نؤمن لك حتى نرى الله جهرة...﴾ (٢:٥٥) The reply to this sort of demand is contained in 6:103 and 42:51 wherein it is clearly stated that it is not for human beings in this life to see Allah, nor to hear him speak face to face.

Reference has already bene made to the unbelievers' demand for angels being sent as messengers.[1] It appears from ibn 'Abbâs's report and from Q. 17:90-93 that they demanded the presentation of angels also as witnesses for the Prophet and revelation. That the unbelievers also asked for bringing their dead ancestors back into life so that they could testify to the truth of resurrection and life after death is specifically mentioned in 44:34-36 as follows:

﴿إن هـٰؤلاء ليقولون * إن هي إلا موتتنا الأولىٰ وما نحن بمنشرين * فأتوا بـٔابآئنآ إن كنتم صادقين﴾ (٤٤: ٣٤-٣٦)

"Indeed these people say: 'There is naught but our first death and we shall not be raised again. So bring our fathers (back) if you are truthful."

To such demands for proofs or "signs" (*'âyât*) the Qur'ân, and therefore the Prophet, gave appropriate and correct replies. Indeed most of the Makkan part of the Qur'ân and also a considerable portion of the Madinan part deal with the unbelievers' denial of *risâlah* (messengership), *waḥy* (revelation) and *ba'th* (ressurection and life after death) on the one hand, and their demands for "signs" or proofs (*'âyât*) in support of those facts, on the other. If we analyze the Qur'anic replies to these demands the following facts emerge:

First, it is stated very clearly that the power and competence to perform "miracles" belong solely to Allah. if any previous Prophet did come forward with a miracle, he did it specifically by Allah's leave and enabling him to do so. The Prophet's themselves were no more than human beings, possessing no supernatural power. '...And it was never possible for any Messenger to bring a 'sign' except by Allah's leave and enabling ..." (40:78; 13:38)=

﴿... وما كان لرسول أن يأتي بـٔاية إلا بإذن الله...﴾

"Say: 'Verily 'signs' rest with Allah; I am only a clear warner" (29:50)=
﴿... قل إنما الأيـٰت عند الله وإنمآ أنا نذير مبين﴾

"Say Allah has certainly the power to send down a 'sign'; but most of them do not know." (6:37)= ﴿... قل إن الله قادر علىٰ أن ينزّل ءاية ولـٰكنّ أكثرهم لا يعلمون﴾

1. *Supra*, pp. 627-629.

The instances of "miracles" on the part of some previous Prophet's, as given in the Qur'ân, further illustrate this fact. Thus Prophet 'Îsâ (Jesus), peace be on him, performed the "miracles" of bringing a clay figure of bird into life, healing the blind and the lepers, etc., "by Allah's leave" (بإذن الله).[1] The case of Mûsâ, peace be on him, is more instructive. He throws his stick by Allah's command; but as it turns into a moving snake he is frightened and holds back. Therefore Allah again commands him: "Seize it and be not afraid; We shall make it return to its former state."[2] When, therefore, Muḥammad (ﷺ) stated in reply to the Makkans' demand for specific "miracles" that he was no more than a man, a mere Messenger, he in fact only emphasized the true nature and source of miracles. He did *not refuse* to perform any miracle. There was no question of his refusing; for it was *not* within his own power and competence to perform any.

Secondly, the unbelievers demanded the performance of the unusual acts, as specified by them, not out of their sincere desire to ascertain the truth but out of obstinate disbelief and evil motive of discomfiting the Prophet. Hence, even if their demands had been acceded to, they would have rejected the performances as "sorcery" or on such other pretexts. Their attitude is very correctly portrayed by the Qur'ân as follows: "Even if We had sent down on you a book written on parchment so that they could touch it with their hands, the unbelievers would have cerainly said: 'This is nothing but obvious magic." (6:7)=

﴿ولو نزّلنا عليك كتـٰبا فى قرطاس فلمسوه بأيديهم لقال الذين كفروا إن هـٰذآ إلا سحر مبين﴾

"And even if We opened out to them a gate from the sky and they were to continue ascending therein, they would surely have said: 'Verily our eyes have been intoxicated; nay, we have been bewitched by sorcery." (15:14-15)=

﴿ولو فتحنا عليهم بابا من السمآء فظلوا فيه يعرجون * لقالوٓا إنما سكّرت أبصـٰرنا بل نحن قوم مسحورون﴾
(١٥-١٤:١٥)

"And if their spurning is hard on you so that you would, if you could, seek a tunnel into the earth or a ladder into the sky and thus bring them a "sign" (it would be of no avail). If Allah so willed, He could get them together on guidance. So be not of those who are ignorant!" (6:35)=

1. Q. 3:49.
2. Q. 20:19-21.

﴿وإن كان كبر عليك إعراضهم فإن استطعت أن تبتغى نفقا فى الأرض أو سلّما فى السمآء فتأتيهم بـاية ولو شآء الله لجمعهم على الهدىٰ فلا تكوننّ من الجـٰهلين﴾ (٦ : ٣٥)

"And they swore their strongest oaths by Allah that if a sign came to them they would certainly believe by it. Say: 'Signs are with Allah'. And what should make you realized that even if it came, they would not believe?... And even if We did send angels unto them, and the dead spoke to them and brought together before them all things face to face, they would not be the ones to believe, unless Allah willed so; but most of them are ignorant." (6:109,111)=

﴿وأقسموا بالله جهد أيمـٰنهم لإن جآءتهم ءاية ليؤمنن بها قل إنما الأيـٰت عند الله وما يشعركم أنها إذا جآءت لا يؤمنون. .... ولو أننا نزلنآ إليهم الملـٰئكة وكلمهم الموتىٰ وحشرنا عليهم كلّ شىء قُبُلا ما كانوا ليؤمنوا إلا أن يشاء الله ولـٰكنّ أكثرهم يجهلون﴾ (٦ : ١٠٩ ، ١١١)

"And even though there were a Qur'ân wherewith the mountains were moved and the earth cleft assunder or the dead made to speak (it would have been the same). Rather, the command is with Allah in all affairs..." (13:31)=

﴿ولو أن قرءانا سيرت به الجبال أو قُطعت به الأرض أو كُلّم به الموتىٰ بل لله الأمر جميعا...﴾ (١٣ : ٣١)

Thirdly, the fact that the unbelievers' demands for the performance of acts apecified by them were not met does not mean that they were not shown appropriate and convincing "signs" or "miracles". On the contrary, they were provided with all sorts of miracles — intellectual, physical and historical — except those they specifically demanded, and that for reasons mentioned below. As regards the intellectual miracle, it was pointed out that the Qur'ân itself was (and is) a sufficient miracle. "And is it not enough for them that We have sent down to you the Book which is recited unto them? Verily there is in it mercy and reminder for a people who believe." (29:51)=

﴿أولم يكفهم أنآ أنزلنا عليك الكتـٰب يتلىٰ عليهم إن فى ذ لك لرحمة و ذكرىٰ لقوم يؤمنون﴾ (٢٩ : ٥١)

Indeed the Qur'ân is an abiding miracle in three important respects. It was given out by a person who acknowledgedly had not received any formal education and who, even according to the unbelievers' own admission, was himself incapable of producing the text so that they sometimes characterized it as evident magic (سحر مبين) and at other times alleged that he had been prompted or dictated by others. It is also a miracle in respect of its contents. Among other things it contains statements about the facts and secrets of nature that are becoming clear to man only with the progress of scientific knowledge and that could not have been stated by any individual on the basis of the then existing human knowledge. Again, the Qur'ân is a lin-

guistic miracle in respect of its inimitable diction, style of expression and presentation of the themes and facts. Not for nothing does it repeatedly throw out challenges for anyone to come up with anything like it.

Along with this intellectual miracle, physical miracles also were provided. There are reports informing us that the Prophet performed, with Allah's leave and authorization, some other miracles from time to time. The most important in this series of physical miracles was the cleaving of the moon in two parts which was viewed by a number of on-lookers. This particular miracle is reffered to in the Qur'ân along with the usual reaction of the die-hard unbelievers as follows: "The hour (of reckoning) has drawn near; and the moon is split. But if they see a sign they say: 'A transient sorcery." (54:1-2)=﴿اقتربت الساعة وانشق القمر ⁕ و إن يروا ءاية يعرضوا ويقولوا سحر مستمر﴾.[1]

The performance was no "sorcery", but it was of course transient and experienced only by the viewers at the time. Therefore the Qur'ân repeatedly draws attention to the continuous miracles and wonderous "signs" of Allah that exist all arround us — in nature, in the universe and in man and other creatures. The way reference is made to these 'signs' leaves no room for doubt that it is done in reply to the demand not only of the unbelievers of Makka but of all times for 'signs' and miracles. Thus, if the appearance of the moon in two equal parts was transient, its regular and repeated transformation through a specific period from the shape of a narrow leaf to a full circular form, and indeed its orbiting round the earth, are no transient features and no less wonderous. Nor are the sun and the moon accidental entities. They have been created and subjected to a definite law and course for definite purposes and functions by the Lord of all creation, and that also for a specific time which is determined by and known to Him alone. Man's intellect and consciousness are repeatedly roused to such phenomena of the physical world and each time it is emphasized that each phenomenon constitutes a wonderous "sign" of Allah. Of such numerous passages in the Qur'ân the following may be cited as instances:

﴿ومن ءايـٰته أن خلقكم من تراب ثم إذآ أنتم بشر تنتشرون ⁕ ومن ءايـٰته أن خلق لكم من أنفسكم أزوٰجا لتسكنوٓا إليها وجعل بينكم مودة ورحمة إن في ذٰلك لأيـٰت لقوم يتفكرون ⁕ ومن ءايـٰته خلق السمـٰوٰت والأرض واختلـٰف ألسنتكم وألوٰنكم إن في ذٰلك لأيـٰت للعـٰلمين ⁕ ومن ءايـٰته منامكم بالّيل والنّهار وابتغاؤكم من فضله

1. There are a number of authentic reports about the incident. See for instance *Bukhârî*, nos. 3868-3871, 4864-4858; *Muslim*, nos. 2800-2803; Ibn Kathîr, *Tafsîr*, VII, 448-450; Al-Suyûṭî, *Al-Durr al-Manthûr*, V, pp. 669-671.

إن في ذلك لأيـٰت لقوم يسمعون * ومن ءايـٰته يريكم البرق خوفا وطمعا وينزّل من السمآء مآء فيحي به الأرض بعد موتها إن في ذلك لأيـٰت لقوم يعقلون * ومن ءايـٰته أن تقوم السمآء والأرض بأمره ثم إذا دعاكم دعوة من الأرض إذا أنتم تخرجون ﴾ (٣٠ : ٢٠-٢٥)

"And it is of His *signs* that He has created you of soil, and lo, you are human beings dispersed (far and wide). And it is of His *signs* that He created for you mates (pairs) from among yourselves, that you may dwell in tranquility with them. And he has ordained love and kindness between you. Verily in that are sure signs for a people who reflect. And of his *signs* is the creation of the skies and the earth, and the variations in your languages and in your colours. Verily in that are signs for a people who have knowledge. And of His *signs* are your sleeping by night and day and your seeking of His bounty (i.e. quest for livelihood). Verily in that are sure signs for those who heed. And of His *signs* is that He shows you the lightning by way of fear and hope; and He sends down from the sky water and therewith He gives life to the earth after it has been dead (barren). Verily in that are signs for a people who understand. And it is of His *signs* that the sky and the earth are in their positions by His command. Then when He calls you by a single call, lo, from the earth you come out." (30:20-25)

﴿ هو الذى أنزل من السمآء مآء لكم منه شراب ومنه شجر فيه تسيمون * ينبت لكم به الزّرع والزّيتون والنّخيل والأعنـٰب ومن كل الثّمرٰت إن في ذلك لأية لقوم يتفكرون * وسخّر لكم الّيل والنّهار والشّمس والقمر والنّجوم مسخّرٰت بأمره إن في ذلك لأيـٰت لقوم يعقلون * وما ذرأ لكم في الأرض مختلفا ألوٰنه إن في ذلك لأية لقوم يذكرون ﴾ (١٦ : ١٠-١٣)

"It is He Who sends down from the sky water for you, there is drink therefrom, and out of it (grows) vegetation (trees) in which you graze (your cattle). With it He produces for you corn, olives, date-palms, grapes and every kind of fruit. Verily there is in that a sure sign for a people who reflect. And he has subordinated the night and the day for you (your needs), and the sun and the moon (too). And the stars are in subjection by His command.Verily in that are sure signs for a people who understand. And all that He has scattered for you in this earth of different colours (types). Verily in that is a sure sign for a people who contemplate." (16:10-13)

﴿ وءاية لهم الأرض الميتة أحيينـٰها وأخرجنا منها حبا فمنه يأكلون * وجعلنا فيها جنّـٰت من نّخيل وأعنـٰب وفجّرنا فيها من العيون * ليأكلوا من ثمره وما عملته أيديهم أفلا يشكرون * سبحـٰن الذى خلق الأزوٰج كلّها مما تنبت الأرض ومن أنفسهم ومما لا يعلمون * وءاية لهم الّيل نسلخ منه النهار فإذا هم مظلمون * والشّمس تجرى لمستقرّ لها ذلك تقدير العزيز العليم * والقمر قدرنـٰه منازل حتىٰ عاد كالعرجون القديم * لا الشّمس ينبغى لها أن تدرك القمر ولا الّيل سابق النّهار وكلّ في فلك يسبحون * وءاية لّهم أن حملنا ذرّيّتهم في الفلك المشحون ﴾ (٣٦ : ٣٣-٤١)

1. There are indeed a large number of such passages in the Qur'an drawing attention to the "signs" of Allah. See for instance Q. 6:95-99; 7:57-58; 10:67; 13:2-4; 16:65-67, 69, 79; 17:12; 26:7-8; 28:86; 29:44.

"And a sign for them is the dead earth. We give it life and produce from it grain, so they eat of it. And We lay in it gardens of date-palms and grape-vines; and We cause springs to gush forth in it, that they may eat of its fruits. Their hands did not do it. Will they not then give thanks. Glory be to Him Who created all the pairs (of sexes) of what the land grows and of themselves and of what they do not know. And a sign for them is the night. We strip it of the day and lo, they are in darkness. And the sun moves on to its appointed time and place; that is the ordaining of the All-Mighty, the All Knowing. And the moon, we have appointed for it stages, till it reverts to the like of an old date-stalk. Neither is it for the sun to overtake the moon, nor can the night outstrip the day. And each floats along an orbit. And a sign for them is that We carried their progeny (through the deluge) in the laden ark." (36:33-41)

Besides these "miracles" of creation and of the universe attention was drawn also to the instance of previous Prophets and the retribution that befell their respective peoples on account of their persistent disbelief and disobedience even after they had been provided with clear *signs* as demanded by them. These were cited as "standing signs" because knowledge and memories of them were so universal and fresh and the scenes of destruction and ruins of those peoples were so vivid and well-known that no one could question the truth and miraculous nature of those events. Particular mention in this connection was made to the Prophets Mûsâ (Moses), Nûḥ, Hûd, Ṣâliḥ, Shu'ayb and Lûṭ (peace be on them) and the punishment of their respective peoples for their persistent disbelief and sins. Thus 26:60-67 gives an account of how Pharaoh and his followers rejected the truth even though Mûsâ (p.b.h.) had shown them unmistakable 'signs' and how they were ultimately drowned while Mûsâ and his followers escaped harm. It concludes by emphasizing: "Verily in that is a sure sign; but most of them do not believe" ﴿إن فى ذلك لآية وما كان أكثرهم مؤمنين﴾. The instance of Nûḥ (p.b.h.), his peoples' intransigence, the deluge and the saving of the believers on the Ark are referred to in 26:114-119 and *'âyah* 121 repeats the assertion: "Verily in that is a sure sign; but most of them do not believe."[1] Again, the instance of Prophet Hûd (p.b.h.) and his people, the 'Âd, and the latter's destruction on account of their arrogance and rejection of the truth are refered to in 26:123-139; and it concludes with the same lesson: "Verily in that is a sure sign; but most of them do not believe."[2] The same lesson is repeated after a reference to Prophet Ṣâliḥ (p.b.h.) and the destruction of his people, the Thamûd, in

1. See also Q. 23:23-30; 29:14-15 and 54:9-15.
2. See also Q. 29:38-40.

26:141-159.[1] The reference to Prophet Lûṭ (p.b.h.) and the exemplary punishment of his people is more pointed and it ends with the same emphasis: "Verily in that is a sure sign; but most of them do not believe."[2] The scene of destruction of Lûṭ's people to the south-east of the Dead Sea is so clearly visible even today that elsewhere in the Qur'ân it is very appropriately stated: "We have indeed *left* thereof a clear sign for a people who understand" ﴿ولقد تركنا منها ءاية بينة لقوم يعقلون﴾.[3] Similary with reference to the episode of the Deluge and the Ark, which is a universally acknowledged event of history, it is stated: "We have left it as a sign; so is there anyone to take admonition?" ﴿ولقد تركنـها ءاية فهل من مدكر﴾.[4] The use of the term *taraknâ* (We left تركنا) in these *'ayahs* is very significant. It emphsizes the continuing and abiding nature of the "signs" connected with the incidents alluded to. Reference is made also to other Prophets as Shu'ayb (p.b.h.) and his people of Madayn, the "Companions of the Wood" (*'Aṣḥâb al-'Aykah*); and in each case the same emphasis is repeated: "Verily in that is a sure sign...."[5]

It may be noted that while the Makkan unbelievers were asking the Prophet to bring them a particular "sign", he was pointing out to them, through the Qur'ân, the signs of Allah existing in the universe in and in their own environment. There was no evading of the issue in that approach; for, as it was clearly stated all through, "signs" or performance of miracles belonged solely to the power of Allah; the Prophets themselves had no such power. Indeed one of the purposes in relating the historical "signs" — the instances of former peoples' disobedience and the consequent retributions befalling them — was to bring home to the Makkan unbelievers that their demad for specified miracles was not being readily met because, like the other peoples, if they persisted in their disbelief even after they had been provided with the 'sign' asked for, Allah's wrath and retribution would immediately befall them without any respite. That would be only natural; because demand for a specified 'sign' constituted a challenge to Allah's power on the one hand and to the *bona-fide* of His messenger on the other. Hence, if the unbelievers persisted in their defiance and rejection of the truth after their challenge had been met, there would remain no alternative but to award

1. See also Q. 27:45-52; 29:38.
2. Q. 26:160-175. See also 15:57-75; 27:54-58; 29:31-35; 51:31-37.
3. Q. 29:35. See also 51:37 which states: ﴿وتركنا فيها ءاية للذين يخافون العذاب الأليم﴾
4. Q. 54:15
5. See Q. 29:36-37 and 26:176-191.

them the punishment due. This was an eventuality which Allah, in His omniscience and infinite mercy, did not intend for the Makkans and which the Prophet, in his kindness and consideration for his people, did not wish for them.That was the sole reason for not meeting the Makkans' demand for the 'sign' they asked for, though other miracles were indeed caused to happen through the Prophet.

This reason is very clearly stated in 17:59 which runs as follows:

﴿وما منعنا أن نرسل بالأيـٰـت إلا أن كذّب بها الأولون وءاتينا ثمود الناقة مبصرة فظلموا بها وما نرسل بالأيـٰـت إلا تخويفا﴾ (١٧: ٥٩)

"Nothing hinders Us from sending down the signs (i.e. the signs asked for) except that the former peoples treated them as false. We had given the Thamûd people the she-camel as an eye-opener; but they treated her wrongfully. We do not send the 'signs' (i.e, the signs specified) except as an ultimatum." (17:59)

The punishment inflicted on the Thamûd, though not specifically mentioned, is clearly implied here. The same principle is enunciated in connection with the reply given to the demand for a table set with meal made by the people of Jesus (p.b.h.) as follows:

﴿قال الله إني منزّلها عليكم فمن يكفر بعد منكم فإنّي أعذّبه عذابا لا أعذبه، أحدا من العـٰـلمين﴾ (٥: ١١٥)

"Allah said: I will send it down unto you; but whoever of you disbelieves after that, I will inflict upon him such a punishment as I have not inflicted on anyone among all the creations." (5:115).

It may also be noted that the Prophet, far from avoiding the Makkan's demand for miracles, was rather eager to obtain their conversion even by Allah's providing them with the signs they asked for. This is indicated by 6:35 quoted above,[1] which says that he would have even sought "a tunnel into the earth" or "a ladder into the sky" in order to bring them the desired sign. The same eagerness on his part is indicated in 26:3-4 which says:

﴿لعلك بـٰـخع نفسك ألّا يكونوا مؤمنين * إن نّشأ ننزّل عليهم مّن السمآء ءاية فظلّت أعنـٰـقهم لها خـٰـضعين﴾ (٢٦: ٣-٤)

"It may be that you are afflicted with grief that they do not become believers. If it were Our will, We could send down to them a sign from the sky to which their necks would bend in humility." (26:3-4)

That the Prophet was eager for satisfying the Makkans with such a miracle as specified by them, and at the same time did not like to see a similar

1. Q. *Supra*, pp. 636-637.

fate befall them as had befallen the previous peoples, is very well illustrated by the following report. The Makkan leaders once came to the Prophet and asked him to turn the Ṣafâ into a hill of gold if he really was Allah's Messenger. He intended to pray to Allah to grant their wish. Thereupon Allah informed him that their wish might be granted; but if they did not accept the truth even after that, Allah's retribution would immediately descend on them and they would not be given any respite. He was asked whether he preferred that eventuality to the alternative of giving them respite and a chance to reform. He preferred the second alternative.[1]

Such kindness and consideration for them, however, was only misunderstood by the unbelievers. In the intensity of their disbelief and out of sheer folly they persistently demanded of the Prophet to hasten on them Allah's wrath and retribution of which he had been warning them. The Qur'ân repeatedly refers to these foolish demands on their part and provides appropriate replies to them and guuidance to the Prophet. Thus 29:53-55 states:

﴿ويستعجلونك بالعذاب ولولآ أجل مسمّى لجآءهم العذاب وليأتينّهم بغتة وهم لا يشعرون * يستعجلونك بالعذاب وإن جهنّم لمحيطة بالكـٰفرين * يوم يغشـٰهم العذاب من فوقهم ومن تحت أرجلهم ويقول ذوقوا ما كنتم تعملون﴾ (٢٩:٥٣-٥٥)

"They ask you to hasten the retibution (on them). Had there not been a term appointed, the retribution would surely have befallen them. Certainly it would have come on them unawares. They ask you to hasten the reribution (on them). Verily the hell will encompass the unbelievers. That day the punishment will engulf them from above them and from below their feet; and He will say: Taste what you used to do." (29:53-55)

Similarly 37:176-179 states:

﴿أفبعذابنا يستعجلون * فإذا نزل بساحتهم فسآء صباح المنذرين * وتولّ عنهم حتى حين * وأبصر فسوف يبصرون﴾ (٣٧:١٧٦-١٧٩)

"Do they want Our retribution to be hastened (on them)? But when it befalls their arena, evil indeed will be the dawn for those who are warned. So turn away from them for a while and watch, for they will soon see (what awaits them)." (37:176-179)

Again, 10:11 states:

﴿ولو يعجّل الله للنّاس الشرّ استعجالهم بالخير لقضى إليهم أجلهم فنذر الّذين لا يرجون لقآءنا فى طغيـٰنهم يعمهون﴾ (١٠:١١)

1. See the report in its various forms in Ibn Kathîr, *Tafsîr*, III, 47-48 (commentary on 17:59).

"An if Allah were to hasten for men evil as they would have the good hastened for them, then would their term have been settled at once. But We leave those who do not exepect meeting Us to wander blindly in their transgression." (10:11)

There are indeed other passages on the theme.[1] These all show the folly and unreasonableness of the unbelievers' demands on the one hand and the patience and forbearance with which they were being treated, on the other. The ultimate outcome only illustrates the Divine wisdom contained in the replies given to their demands.

1. See 6:58; 8:31-33; 13:6; 22:47; and 38:16-17.

CHAPTER XXVII

ORGANIZED OPPOSITION: II. DISSUASION, ENTICEMENTS, VIOLENCE AND PERSECUTION

Along with raising the above noted objections and engaging in argumentation with the Prophet the Quraysh leaders adopted other methods to frustrate his work and mission. They took steps to prevent people from listening to him; they attempted to divert him from his course by dangling before him the prospects of wealth and leadership and otherwise by making offers of compromise; and, simultaneously, they carried on persecution and committed violence upon the converts to make them recant and revert to idolatry. They even made several attempts to kill the Prophet and thus put an end to his movement.

I. DISSUASION

As the *ḥajj* season approached after the beginning of "open call" the Quraysh leaders took steps to prevent the pilgrims and visitors from coming in contact with the Prophet who was sure to approach them and speak to them during that time. The Quraysh leaders realized that the allegation they had been making against the Prophet of his being mad, insane, a poet, a sorcerer, etc., were all untrue and that they had been making those allegations only for the sake of opposition. They were also aware that the various allegations were inconsistent. Hence they found it necessary to adhering to some specific and plausible allegation against the Prophet which might appear sensible to the piligrims and delegates coming from all Arabia. Therefore, in a meeting of the leaders, Al-Walîd ibn al-Mughîrah urged them to adopt a uniform point of propaganda, telling them that if different persons spoke differently about Muḥammad (ﷺ) they would simply contradict and neutralize the effects of one another's assertions. At this one person proposed that the Prophet should be described as a soothsayer. To this proposal Al-Walîd objected, saying: "By Allah, he is no soothsayer. We have seen and heard many a soothsayer, but Muḥammad's talks are not like theirs." In this way proposals for describing him as an insane person, a poet, etc. were one by one made and discarded on various grounds. Ultimately Al-Walîd suggested that the nearest to what would appear to be reasonable was to describe the Prophet as a magician whose words brought about dissension in the society and created divisions between parents and their children,

between husbands and their wives and between men and their relatives. All agreed upon this plan. Accordingly, when the *ḥajj* season arrived the Quraysh leaders and their men took positions at the different points of entry into the city and as each individual or group arrived they warned them against the Prophet and asked them to keep away from him and never to pay any attention to his words.[1]

According to one view the Qur'ânic passage 74:11-25 refers to this incident, particularly to the role of Al-Walîd ibn Al-Mughîrah in planning the malpropaganda against the Prophet.[2] This manoeuvre of the Quraysh leaders, however, far from retarding the spread of Islam, rather helped its cause indirectly. Ibn Isḥâq mentions specifically that as the *ḥajj* season of that year ended and the Arabs returned home the news of the appearance of the Prophet and the inklings of his message reached the nook and corner of Arabia.[3]

While the above mentioned plan was adopted by the Quraysh leaders especially for the *ḥajj* season, they did not totally stop their other allegations. They also constantly endeavoured to prevent the Makkans from listening to the Prophet's discourses, especially his recitation of the Qur'ân, which the Quraysh leaders realized exerted an enchanting influence on the listeners. Hence whenever the Prophet recited the Qur'ân within the hearing of others the Makkan leaders and their agents created noise and raised a hue and cry to frustrate the effect of the recitation. The leaders in fact employed their men specifically for this work. These men usually followed the Prophet from place to place, created disturbances at the time of his recitation of the Qur'ân and, for that purpose, often hemmed him in from right and left. The Qur'ân refers to this manoeuvre of the unbelievers in a number of its passages. "And those who disbelieved said: 'Do not listen to this Qur'ân; and talk at random in the midst of it (the recitation), so that you may overwhelm and overcome (it): "(41:26)= (﴿وقال الذين كفروا لا تسمعوا لهذا القرءان والغوا فيه لعلكم تغلبون﴾ ٤١: ٢٦).[4]

"What is the matter with the unbelievers that they rush on you (madly), from the right and from the left, in desultory crowds?" (70:36-37)=

1. Ibn Hishâm, 270-271; Ibn Isḥâq, *Al-Siyar wa al-Maghâzî*, 150-152.
2. *Ibid.*, 271. See also Al-Qurṭubî, *Tafsîr*, XIX, pp. 70-77.
3. Ibn Hishâm, 272. Ibn Isḥâq's statement runs as follows:

(وصدرت العرب من ذلك الموسم بأمر رسول الله ﷺ، فانتشر ذكره في بلاد العرب كلها)

4. See also Al-Ṭabari, *Tafsîr*, XXIV, 112-113 and Ibn Kathîr, *Tafsîr*, VII, 162-163.

﴿فمال الذين كفروا قبلك مهطعين * عن اليمين وعن الشمال عزين﴾ ٧٠: ٣٦-٣٧.[1]

The unbelievers did not let the Prophet alone even while reciting the Qur'ân at prayer in his house (or at Dar al-Arqam). If such recitation was heard from outside the house they hurried to abuse him and created noise so that others might not listen to the recitation.[2] It is reported that with reference to such conduct of the unbelievers 17:110 was revealed. It directs the Prophet: "... Do not raise your voice (too much) in prayer, nor lower it (too much), but adopt a middle course between them

﴿ ... و لا تجهر بصلاتك و لا تخافت بها و ابتغ بين ذالك سبيلا﴾ (١٧: ١١٠).[3]

Even after such afforts to prevent the people from listening to the Qur'ân if anyone grew inquisitive about it and enquired of the leaders about its content and purport they put the most adverse construction upon it and distorted its meaning in order to discourage the enquirer from paying any heed to it. Often they described the revelation as nothing more than tales and legends of the ancients ﴿أسـطير الأولين﴾. The Qur'ân refers to this practice of the unbelieving leaders and reminds them that by so doing they would be responsible not only for their own sin but also, partially, for the sin of those uninformed people whom they misled. "And when it is said to them: 'What is it that your Lord has sent down? 'They say: 'Tales of the ancients.' Let them (thus) bear their own burdens in full, on the Day of Judgement, and also some of the burdens of those without knowledge whom they mislead..." (16:24-25=

﴿ وإذا قيل لهم ماذا أنزل ربكم قالوا أسـطير الأولين * ليحملوا أوزارهم كاملة يوم القيـمة و من أوزار الذين يضلّونهم بغير علم...﴾ (١٦: ٢٤-٢٥)[4]

"Those who distort Our signs (revelation) are not hidden from Us. Is he who is cast into the fire (hell) better or he who comes safe on the Day of Resurrection? Do what you like. Surely He observes what you do." (41:40)=

﴿إن الذين يُلحدون فى ءايـتنا لا يخفون علينا أفمن يلقىٰ فى النّار خير أم مّن يأتى ءامنا يوم القيـمة اعملوا ما شئتم إنه بما تعملون بصير﴾ (٤١: ٤٠)

Another method to keep the people away from the Prophet was adopted by the Quraysh leaders on the suggestion of Al-Naḍr ibn al-Ḥârith. He poin-

1. See also Al-Ṭabarî, *Tafsir,* XXIV, 84-85; Al-Qurṭubî, *Tafsîr,* XVIII, 292-294 and Ibn Kathîr, *Tafsîr,* VIII, 255-256.

2. *Musnad,* I., 23, 215; *Bukhârî,* no. 7490; *Muslim,* No. 446.

3. *Ibid.* See also Ibn Kathîr, *Tafsîr,* V, 126-127; Al-Ṭabarî, *Tafsîr,* XV, 184-185.

4. See also Q. 6:25; 8:31; 23:83; 25:5; 27:68; 46:17; 68:15 and 83:13.

ted out to them that their policy of calling the Prophet a poet, an insane person, a sorcerer, etc., was unsound, untenable and self-defeating; for he was neither a poet, nor an insane person, nor a sorcerer. Al-Naḍr told them that a positive programme of diversion for the people should be drawn up such as providing them with alternative stories and tales of heroes like Rustam and Isfandiyar of Persia. The Quraysh leaders approved of the suggestion and engaged Al-Naḍr to do the job. Accordingly he obtained a knowledge of those stories and started providing diversion for the people by telling those stories in versification. Whenever the Prophet finished addressing a gathering or reciting the Qur'ân to them, Al-Naḍr immediately stood up before them, recited his stories and concluded by asking the gathering in what ways was Muḥammad (ﷺ) a better and more impressive speaker then he?[1] It is also reported that Al-Naḍr engaged singing maids to attract people so that they did not listen to the Prophet's preachings and recitation of the Qur'ân.

II. ENTICEMENTS AND ATTEMPTS AT COMPROMISE

While the Quraysh leaders employed all the tactics to dissuade the people from listening to the Prophet they at the same time attempted to entice him away from his mission by offering him wealth, position and leadership. This they tried to do when they found that their enmity and opposition, instead of deterring him, only steeled his determination to disseminate his message and that it continued to gain ground, slowly but steadily. One instance of this manoeuvre on their part has been noted above in connection with their demand for various miracles.[2] Ibn Isḥâq gives the report of another such attempt made by them, noting specifically that they did so when Ḥamzah (r.a.) embraced Islam and they saw that the number of the Prophet's followers was steadily increasing.[3] One day the Prophet was sitting alone in the Ka'aba compound. 'Utbah ibn Rabî'ah and other Quraysh leaders also were there in another part of the compound where they used to assemble. Thus finding an opportinity to talk to the Prophet in isolation 'Utbah suggested to the Quraysh leaders that if they so approved he would go to Muḥammad (ﷺ) and make him some offers of compromise, adding that he might accept some of the offers and thus refrain from his mission. The Quraysh leaders approved of 'Utbah's suggestion and authorized him to negotiate with the

1. Ibn Hishâm, 299-300. See also Al-Qurṭubî, *Tafsîr*, XIV, 52.
2. *Supra*, pp. 631-637.
3. Ibn Hishâm, I, 313.

Prophet. Understandably, the nature of the offers to be made to him were discussed and agreed upon. Accordingly 'Utbah went to him and began his talk by addressing him affectionately and telling him that he indeed had a respectable position in the society by virtue of his ancestry, but that he had greatly stirred the society and caused dissension in it by his activities. As on the other occasion, this time also 'Utbah told him that if in doing so his aim was to amass wealth or become a leader, they would give him all the wealth he desired and would also accept him as their leader, or even make him their king and would not transact any affair without his consent and approval. If, on the other hand, he was under the spell of any evil spirit, they would leave no stone unturned and would incur all the expences needed to get a cure for him. As he finished saying this the Prophet asked him whether he had anything more to say. He replied that he had said all that he had to say. Thereupon the Prophet asked him to listen and recited unto him *sûrah* 41 (*Al-fuṣṣilat*). 'Utbah listened to the recitation with rapt attention. On finishing the recitation the Prophet prostrated himself and then, after raising his head, told 'Utbah that that was what he (the Prophet) had to say in reply to his offers. He left the place in a thoughtful mood. As he approached the Quraysh leaders they observed amongst themselves that he was a changed man and that his countenance was not the same as that with which he had gone to Muḥammad (ﷺ). As 'Utbah came to them they asked what was the matter with him. He calmly replied that he had never heard the like of what he had just heard from Muḥammad (ﷺ). "By Allah", continued 'Utbah, "it is no poetry. O leaders of Quraysh, listen to me and take my advice. Let this man alone with his affair. By Allah, what I have heard of his words are full of a great message. If, then, the Arabs get the upper hand over him, you will have your work done without you yourselves doing anything; if, on the other hand, he prevails over them, his rule and honour will be your rule and honour and you will be the happiest of men on his account." Hearing this the Quraysh leaders remarked: "O Father of Al-Walîd, you have surely been bewitched by his words." 'Utbah replied that he had expressed his opinion; it was now up to them to do what they thought it fit to do.[1]

That the Quraysh leaders repeatedly made similar offers to the Prophet is evident also from the account of one of their deputations to 'Abû Ṭâlib. It is related that when 'Abû Ṭâlib informed the Prophet of what the Quraysh lea-

1. *Ibid.*, 313-314.

ders had to say he movingly replied in effect that he would not abandon his mission and would rather persist in its pursuit. The nature of his reply leaves no room for doubt that the Quraysh leaders had combined their threat and ultimatum on that accasion too with the alternative offers of wealth and position to the Prophet if only he desisted from his work.[1]

The Quraysh leaders did not leave the matter there. They attempted to deflect the Prophet from his course, indeed to frustrate his mission by offering him a compromise formula in the matter of belief and worship. Reports say that they came forward with the proposal that they would cease their hostility towards the Prophet and his followers if he only showed some consideration for their goddesses and assigned them some position in the system of beliefs he had been advocating. They even proposed that they would worship Allah for one year if the Prophet undertook to worship the idols for another year, adding that the arrangement had the advantage that if there was anything good in the worship of Allah they would benefit thereby; whereas the Prophet and his followers would reciprocally derive the benefit of whatever good was there in the worship of the idols. The Prophet of course rejected this absurd proposal. It was with reference to such manoeuvres of the unbelieving leaders that Allah instructed his messenger as follows:

﴿قل يـٰأيها الكـٰفرون * لا أعبد ما تعبدون * ولا أنتم عـٰبدون ما أعبد * ولا أنا عابد ما عبدتم * ولا أنتم عـٰبدون ما أعبد * لكم دينكم ولِىَ دين﴾ (١٠٩)

"Say: 'O you the unbelievers, I do not worship what you worship; nor do you worship what I worship. And I will not worship what you have been wont to worship; nor will you worship what I worship. For you is your way (*dîn*); for me mine."**2** (109)

On another occasion the Quraysh leaders came to the Prophet and similarly asked him to make some concessions to their goddesses. According to one report they on one night sat with the Prophet and conversed with him till the morning, placating him with soft words and addressing him as their leader and suggesting to him the advisability of making some compromise with regard to the goddesses, at least as a face-saving device for the leaders to follow him. Another version of the report specifically mentions

1. *Infra*, p. 659.

2. Ibn Kathîr, *Tafsîr*, VIII, 527; Al-Shawkani, *Tafsîr*, V, 506; Al-Wâḥidî, '*Asbâb etc.*, (ed Al-Sayyid Aḥmad Ṣaqr), second print, 1404/1984, p. 505; Ibn Hishâm, I, 388.

'Umayyah ibn Khalaf and 'Abû Jahl as among the leaders who thus approached the Prophet. The Qur'ânic passage 17:73-73 alludes to the incident and states how Allah protected his Messenger against the nefarious design of the unbelieving leaders. It runs as follows:

﴿ وإن كادوا ليفتنونك عن الّذى أوحينا إليك لتفترى علينا غيره وإذا لاتخذوك خليلا * ولولا أن ثبتنك لقد كدت تركن إليهم شيئا قليلا * إذا لأذقنك ضعف الحيوٰة وضعف الممات ثم لا تجد لك علينا نصيرا ﴾(١٧:٧٣-٧٦)

"And they attempted indeed to lure you away from what we had revealed to you, in order that you forge against us something else. In that case they would certainly have accepted you as a friend. And had We not made you firm you would almost have been inclined towards them a little. In that case We should have made you taste double the punishment in this life as also double the punishment on death; and then you would have found none to help you as against us." (17:74-76)

The passage shows clearly that the Prophet had not made even the slightest move towards a compromise with the unbelieving leaders, for Allah protected him against such a pitfall by strengthening his mind and making him firm in matters of belief and principles. Even putting the most unfavourable construction on the passage it may only be said to refer to the Prophet's state of mind vis-a-vis the unbelievers' manoeuvres, rather than to any act of compromise on his part. On the contrary the last *'âyah* (76) reminds him of the gravity of the offence of making even the slightest compromise in matters of belief and principles. It is a warning and guidance for him (as well as for the believers), and in no sense a disapproval of an act already committed.

It is also obvious from the instances cited above, and from the Qur'ân and the reports in general, that it was always the Makkan leaders who took the initiative and made the various proposals for a compromise. This was only natural on their part; for it was their position and vested interests that were threatened by the new message and that these they were eager to preserve by any means. The Prophet, on the other hand, was commissioned and inspired by Allah to deliever a message and to warn the people.There was thus no question of his ever being desirous for making a compromise with the unbelievers. Moreover, Allah had sufficiently forewarned and instructed him about the difficulties and suffering that lay ahead and also about the manoeuvres of the unbelievers. Thus the very first commission to preach contained a directive to bear with patience all the hardships that he would face on account of his work. "And for the sake of your lord have patience." (74:7)= ﴿ولربك فاصبر﴾ In another very early revelation he is warned: "They

desire, if you be compromising, they will also compromise. But do not heed every deceitful oath-maker — a slanderer going about with calumies."(68:9-11)= ﴿ودّوا لو تدهن فيدهنون ٭ و لا تطع كلّ حلاف مّهين ٭ همّاز مشاء بنميم﴾ According to the commentators, the reference here is to 'Abû Jahl; but the description would as well apply to many other Quraysh leaders. It is also noteworthy that the passage clearly states that it was the Quraysh leaders who desired a compromise. Further, it shows that they were not sincere in showing that attitude; for, some of them, while making promises of compromise, in fact went about back-biting and slandering the Prophet. Besides these passages there are also a number of other passages which, while emphasizing that what the Prophet was giving out was indeed from Allah, and that if he ever attributed any saying falsely to Him, he would be severely punished. "If he (the Messenger) were to falsely attribute any fabricated saying against Us, We should certainly seize him by the right hand, and We should certainly then cut off the artery of his heart..."(69:44-46) ﴿ولو تقوّل علينا بعض الأقاويل ٭ لأخذنا منه باليمين ٭ ثم لقطعنا منه الوتين﴾. In view of such clear warnings and instructions given him since the very beginning of his mission, it would simply be unreasonable to think that the Prophet would ever intend to make a compromise with the unbelieving leaders on matters of faith and worship (*tawḥîd*) just for the sake of avoiding their opposition, enmity and even persecution.

III VIOLENCE AND PERSECUTION

That simultaneously with the above mentioned methods the Quraysh leaders had recourse also to the use of force in order to stop the Prophet and compel the new converts to recant is all too clear from the sources. To begin with, the Quraysh leaders opposed the Prophet's and the Muslims' praying in their new manner near the Ka'ba or at any public place. They were attacked and assaulted if they attempted to do so. It was because of such opposition and attacks that the Muslims, as already pointed out, began to perform prayers at solitary and out-of-the-way valleys. Even then their opponents were on their track and attacked them whenever they were detected. One such incident was serious enough leading to the fixing of Dâr al-Arqam as the place of meeting and prayer for the Muslims.

The leading part in this sort of opposing was played by 'Abû Jahl. The Qur'ân refers to this role of his as follows: ﴿أرءيت الذى ينهىٰ ٭ عبدا إذا صلىٰ﴾ (٩٦:٩-١٠) "Do you see the one who forbids a servant (of Allah) when he prays?" (96:9-10). The servant of Allah mentioned here clearly refers to the

Prophet while his opponent, as indicated by the other *'âyahs* of the *sûrah* considered himself self-sufficient, possessing wealth and counting on the support of his people. The expression *nâdiyah* in the 17th *'âyah* means either his followers or the well-known Dâr al-Nadwah, the council of the Quraysh elders, who used to meet for public purposes at a fixed place in the Ka'ba coumpound. The reports specifically mention 'Abû Jahl who answers well the Qur'ânic description and also say that he made several attempts to prevent the Prophet from praying at the Ka'ba, intending to assault him, but was held back each time by frightful sights presented by the angels.[1]

There were of course others from among the unbelievers who made similar attempts as the Qur'ân says at another place: ﴿ وأنه لَمّا قام عبد الله يدعوه كادوا يكونون عليه لبدا ﴾ (١٩:٧٢) "Yet, when the servant of Allah stood to invoke Him, they (i.e.the unbelievers) were about to mob him from all sides." (72:19).[2] One such person was 'Uqbah ibn Abi Mu'ayṭ. One day when the Prophet was praying near the Ka'ba 'Uqbah, instigated by 'Abû Jahl and other Quraysh leaders, took the intestines and other abdominal wastes of a slaughtered she-camel and threw them upon the Prophet's back as he prostrated himself. The Quraysh leaders burst into laughter as they saw this horrible and wicked sight. It was only when his litte daughter Fâṭimah (may Allah be pleased with her) came and removed the wastes that he could raise his head.[3]

While the Prophet was the main target of the unbelievers' enmity, individual converts also did not escape punishment and torture. Whenever a person was known to have embraced Islam, he was assaulted and was subjected to various forms of torture and persecution including confinement and withholding of food and drink from him in order to make him recant and return to the old faith. It is on record that when a person of family and position embraced Islam 'Abû Jahl went to him, rebuked him severely for his having abandoned his ancestral religion, threatened to destroy his trade, to boycott him and to disgrace and degrade him in all possible ways.[4] Usually the convert's own clan and family took the lead in punishing and persecuting him.

1. See Ibn Hishâm, I (ed. Tadmurî), p. 328.
2. Ibn Kathîr, *Tafsîr*, VIII, 460-461.
3. *Bukharî*, no. 3854; Al-Dhahabî, *Al-Sîrat*, 216.
4. Ibn Hishâm, I, 320.

The cases of assault and persecution upon 'Abû Bakr, Ṭalḥah and 'Abd Allah ibn Mas'ûd have already been mentioned.[1] There were many others like them who were similarly treated. When Al-Zubayr ibn Al-'Awwâm embraced Islam his uncle arrested him and rolled him up in a mat and, among other forms of torture, kept him upon intense heat and smoke in order to compel him to forsake his new faith. He bore all the punishment with patience and did not give up his faith.[2] On 'Uthman ibn 'Affan's conversion his uncle Al-Ḥakam[3] tied him up and threatened not to release him till he abjured Islam. He bore the torture for a long time and did not give in.[4] Mus'ab ibn 'Umayr, on his conversion, was very badly tortured by his cousin (paternal uncle's son) 'Uthmân ibn Ṭalḥah. Mus'ab was also seized and kept confined by his relatives. Ultimately he managed to escape and was among the first group of people who migrated to Abyssinia.[5] When Khâlid ibn Sa'îd ibn al-'Âṣ embraced Islam he fled home out of fear of his father, 'Abû 'Uḥayḥah, who nonetheless caught him and repeatedly beat him up severely in order to make him recant and return to the ancestral religion. He was kept confined for a number of days without being given anything to eat or drink. Even then he did not give in. At last his father disowned him and expelled him from home. He also went to Abyssinia with the first batch of immigrants.[6] Even when 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭab, once the firebrand of the Quraysh against the Muslims embraced Islam, he was not spared by the unbelievers. As already mentioned,[7] he had to move from place to place in order to avoid being mobbed and assaulted by the people. He found security in Al-'Âṣ ibn Wâ'il's offering him his protection.[8] The fact that 'Umar was thus protected by a person of another clan shows that his own clan had disowned him.[9]

Usually the convert's parents and relatives brought all sorts of pressure upon him and also beat him and tortured him to make him recant. In the pro-

1. *Supra*, pp. 517-518.
2. *Al- 'Iṣâbah*, I, 545, no. 2789.
3. Father of the 'Ummayd *Khalîfah* Marwân.
4. Ibn Sa'd, III, 55.
5. Ibn Sa'd, I, 204.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Supra*, pp. 533-534.
8. *Bukharî*, nos. 3864-65.
9. See *infra*, pp. 667-668.

cess he was also put under a heavy psychological and moral pressure, that of obeying the parents and preserving and continuing the ancestral religion and tradition. It was indeed a constant and strong allegation of the unbelievers that the Prophet was abusing their ancestors, destroying their ancestral religion and breaking up families by seducing sons and daughters from their parents. The issue in fact came to the fore in connection with the conversion of Sa'd ibn Abî Waqqâṣ. His mother Ḥamnah bint Sufyân ibn 'Umayyah ('Abu Sufyân's niece, i.e. brother's daughter) went on a hunger strike, vowing not to touch any food, nor any drink until her son forsook Muḥammad (ﷺ), reminding her son that it was the primary duty imposed by all religions to serve and obey one's parents. The situation so perturbed Sa'd that he urged the problem upon the Prophet. The guidance in the matter was given in the revelation of 29:8 which runs as follows:

﴿ ووصّينا الإنسـٰن بوٰلديه حسنا وإن جـٰهداك لتشرك بي ما ليس لك به علم فلا تطعهمآ إليّ مرجعكم فأنبئكم بما كنتم تعملون ﴾ (٢٩:٨)

"We have enjoined on man to be dutiful to his parents; but if they (either of them) strive to make you associate with Me anything of which you have no knowledge, then do not obey them (in this matter). To me is the return of all of you, when I will make you realize what you all used to do."(29:8)[1]

Indeed there was no case of conversion at Makka which escaped punishment and violent persecution. Because of that situation the Muslims are found even after the so-called period of "secret preaching", in fact throughout the Makkan period, attempting to keep their change of faith concealed and performing prayers secretively. The Quraysh leaders' violent opposition and enmity to the new faith were so well known even to the people of distant tribes that whenever any of their members came to Makka to enquire about the new faith he used to contact the Prophet secretly and if he embraced Islam was usually advised by the Prophet not to announce it openly at Makka. Some spirited souls like 'Abu Dharr al-Ghifârî did not, however, heed that advice of caution and, as noted earlier, was not spared as a visitor from an outside tribe but was assaulted and beaten almost to the point of death.[2]

1. See Ibn Kathîr, *Tafsîr*, VI, 275 (comment on 29:8); Al-Zamakhsharî, *Al-Kashshâf*, III, 184-185. According to another view the passage in question was revealed in connection with a similar situation relating to 'Ayyâsh ibn 'Abî Rabî'ah al-Makhzûmî.

2. *Supra*, pp. 537-538.

More vulnerable were, however, the slaves and persons of foreign extraction who settled at Makka as small traders and craftsmen. While the former (slaves) were completely at the mercy of their unbelieving masters, the latter (small traders and craftsmen) were in no better position. For, immediately on conversion their protectors (*ḥalîfs*) invariably maltreated and tortured them almost as slaves. They also forthwith faced boycott and loss of trade and profession. It is on record that many of them became destitutes on conversion to Islam so that the Prophet assigned them in ones or twos to-well-to-do converts for maintenance and support.[1] Even then not all of them escaped torture and persecution. The sources supply us with harrowing tales of inhuman torture upon many of them. Some of the instances are as follows.

One notable instance is that of Khabbâb ibn al-Aratt. Originally from Iraq he was caught by the Rabî'ah tribe and sold as slave to a family of Banû Khuzâ'ah, a confederate of Banû Zuhrah. He was a swordsmith by profession. His profession and trade were ruined on acount of his conversion. The unbelievers tortured him inhumanly. Once he was tied up and put on a pit of burning charcoal which severely burnt his back and left permanent scars on it. During the *khilâfah* of 'Umar Khabbâb once showed those scars on his back.[2]

The accounts of torture upon 'Ammâr and his family are no less heartrending. 'Ammâr's father Yâsir ibn 'Âmir came from Yaman and settled at Makka as a confederate (*ḥalif*) of 'Abû Ḥudhayfa ibn al-Mughîrah of Banû Makhzûm (Abû Jahl's uncle). 'Abû Ḥudhayfah gave his slave-maid Sumayyah bint Khayyâṭ in marriage to Yâsir and 'Ammâr and his brother 'Abd Allah were born to them. 'Abû Ḥudhayfah died when Islam came. 'Ammâr, his parents and brother embraced Islam at a very early date and were severely tortured by the people of Banû Makhzûm, particularly by 'Abû Jahl. Often they were made to lie on burning sands on mid-summer days. Sometimes the Prophet passed by them while they were in such a state of persecution and asked them to bear with patience the persecution, assuring them of the reward of paradise in the hereafter. 'Abû Jahl tortured Yâsir, his wife Sumayyah and their son 'Abd allah to death. Only 'Ammâr survived the inhuman torture.[3]

1. *Supra*, p. 533.
2. Ibn Sa'd, III, 164-165.
3. Ibn Hishâm, 319-320; Ibn Isḥâq, *Al-Siyar wa al-Maghâzî*, 192. Ibn Sa'd, III, 233, 246-249.

Others like Ṣuhayb ibn Sinân, Fukayhah and 'Âmir ibn Fuhayrah were similarly tortured.[1] A classic case, however, was that of Bilâl (ibn Rabâḥ). He was 'Umayyah ibn Khalaf's slave and was one of the very early converts to Islam. 'Umayyah used to torture him inhumanly. Often at the noon of hot summer days, when the bare stony ground of Makka usually burns with heat,'Umayyah made Bilâl lie bare-bodied on such ground and placed heavy and similarly hot stones on his chest and threatened to keep him in that state till the forsook Muḥammad (ﷺ) and his religion. Bilâl would not give in even on the point of death and would only cry "One", "One" (*'aḥad*), signifying his denunciation of polytheism. Sometimes 'Umayyah would have him tied with a rope and given over to the street urchins who would then drag him through the streets of Makka. One day 'Abû Bakr saw him thus tortured and asked 'Umayyah if he was not at all afraid of Allah about that poor fellow (Bilâl). 'Umayyah retortingly told 'Abû Bakr that he was in fact the cause of the poor man's suffering and therefore it behoved him to rescue the poor fellow. At this 'Abû Bakr proposed to exchange his stronger black slave, who was on the old faith, for Bilâl. 'Umayyah accepted the deal. 'Abû Bakr took Bilâl and then freed him.[2]

'Abû Bakr similarly rescued and freed with his own money at least half-a-dozen other slaves and helpless persons from the persecution of their masters. The sources specially mention the following:[3]

(1) Ḥamâmah (Bilâl's mother)[4]

(2) 'Âmir ibn Fuhayrah, slave of Ṭufayl ibn al-Ḥârith.[5]

(3) 'Abû Fukayhah, a slave of Banû 'Abd al-Dâr.[6]

(4) Lubaynah of Lubaybah. Ibn Hishâm mentions her as a slave of Banû Mu'ammal and says that 'Umar, while still an unbeliever, used to torture her severely.[7]

1. Ibid, III, 227-230 and 248.
2. Ibn Hishâm, I, 317-318; Ibn Sa'd, III, 232-233.
3. *Ibid.*, aslo Ibn Isḥâq, *Al-Siyar wa al-Maghâzî*, 121
4. *Al-'Iṣâbah*, V, p. 1813, no. 3301.
5. Ibn Hishâm, I, 318.
6. *'Usd al-Ghâbah*, V, p. 248, No. 6142.
7. Ibn Hishâm, I, 319.

(5) Nahdiyah and her daughter. They were slaves of a lady of Banû 'Abd al-Dâr who used to torture them.[1]

(6) Zannîrah (al-Rûmiyah). She was a slave of a person of Banû 'Addiyy and 'Umar, while an unbeliever, used to torture her. Other reports mention her as a slave of a person of Banû Makhzûm and 'Abû Jahl as her persecutor.[2]

(7) 'Umm 'Ubays (or 'Unays or 'Umays). She was slave-maid of a member of Banû Zuhrah, and Al-Aswad ibn Yaghûth used to torture her.[3]

With reference to such generosity on 'Abû Bakr's part his father used to tell him that if he had spent his wealth on freeing strong and able-bodied persons, instead of women and weaklings, they could have strengthened his arm and helped him against his adversaries. To this remark 'Abû Bakr replied by saying that he did what he did for the sake of Allah Alone. According to some reports the Qur'ânic passage 92:17-20 has reference to this aspect of 'Abû Bakr's activities.[4]

IV. PRESSURE UPON BANÛ HÂSHIM

The Quraysh leaders were intent upon silencing the Prophet by violent means; but here their social system stood in their way. As the clans were more or less independent with regard to their own affairs and as clan affinity and interests overrode all other considerations, it followed that an individual convert could be, and was in fact, punished by his own clan or family or, in the case of a confederate, by the clan or family to which he was attached. If there was an exception to this general rule, it happened only with the implicit approval or connivance of the clan concerned. One outcome of this situation was that the Prophet, though the main target of the Quraysh leaders, could not be violently stopped except with the approval and cooperation of his own clan, Banû Hâshim (and Banû al-Muṭṭalib). The latter, however, though almost entirely disinclined to Islam, were, with the exception of Abû Lahab, at the same time not only averse to punishing the Prophet themselves for his opinions but were strongly opposed to his being persecuted or harmed by others. Hence, if he was to be forcibly silenced, as the

1. *Ibid.*, 318-319.

2. *Ibid.*, 318; *'Usd al-Ghâbah*, V, 462.

3. *Ibid.*, V, 601; Ibn Hishâm, I, 318.

4. Ibn Hishâm, I, 319. Ibn Isḥâq, *Al-Siyar wa al-Maghâzî*, 193-194. Qurṭubi, *Tafsir*, XX, 88-89.

unbelieving leaders wanted him to be, they had either to obtain the consent or connivance of Banû Hâshim or to be ready for a direct conflict and fighting with them.

Naturally the Quraysh leaders first attempted to bring Banû Hâshim to their point of view and repeatedly approached its leader, 'Abû Ṭâlib, the Prophet's uncle and guardian, for the purpose. The reports mention at least three deputations made by the Quraysh leaders to 'Abû Ṭâlib. These deputations, though apparently peaceful manoeuvres, were really motivated by the Quraysh leaders' determination to use violent means against the Prophet; for, their main purpose in leading those deputations was to persuade Banû Hâshim in general, and 'Abû Ṭâlib in particular, either themselves to force the Prophet to stop his mission or to allow them a free hand to deal with him and to stop him, it necessary, by killing him.

As regards the first deputation Ibn Isḥâq states that when the Quraysh leaders found that the Prophet was continuing the work of preaching in spite of their opposition and objections, they led a deputation to his uncle 'Abû Ṭâlib. It consisted of 'Utbah ibn Rabî'ah, his brother Shaybah ibn Rabi'ah, 'Abû Sufyân ibn Ḥarb, 'Abû al-Bakhtarî, Al-Aswad ibn al-Muṭṭalib, 'Abû Jahl, Al-Walîd ibn al-Mughîrah, Nubayh ibn al-Ḥajjâj, his brother Munabbih ibn al-Ḥajjâj, 'Al-Âṣ ibn Wâ'il and some others. They went to 'Abû Ṭâlib and strongly complained to him that his nephew had been abusing their deities, denouncing their religion, befooling their sagacity and declaring their forefathers as misguided and in perdition. They pressed 'Abû Ṭâlib either to stop his nephew or not to come between him and them. They also reminded 'Abû Ṭâlib that he, like them, followed the same religion so that they should suffice him as against his nephew. 'Abû Ṭâlib listened to their representations patiently and attempted to pacify them by soft and sweet words but did not commit himself to any definite course of action. The Quraysh leaders then went away.[1]

Since 'Abû Ṭâlib did not do anything to restrain the Prophet and he continued his work of propagation, the Quraysh leaders led a second deputation to 'Abû Ṭâlib. The purpose of this delegation was to deliver an ultimatum to him. They addressed him by mentioning that on account of his age and nobility he had a respectable position in the Makkan society and that therefore they had asked him to stop his nephew; but since he ('Abû Ṭâlib)

1. Ibn Hishâm, I, 264-265.

had not done anything in that regard, they would no longer tolerate the activities of the Prophet and would fight him and also 'Abû Ṭâlib and Banû Hâshim till either of the two sides was vanquished. Thus delivering the ultimatum the Quraysh leaders left him.[1]

The situation was indeed very delicate and difficult for 'Abû Ṭâlib. On the one hand he did not want to see the other Quraysh clans turn against him and Banû Hâshim in a hostile combination; on the other hand he could not persuade himself to abandoning his nephew and surrendering him to his enemies. In such a state of acute mental tension he sent for the Prophet and when he came told him all about the Quraysh leaders' ultimatum and asked him not to impose upon him ('Abû Ṭâlib) a burden which he would not be able to carry. The Prophet thought that the Quraysh leaders' pressure and ultimatum had weakened his uncle and he was about to abandon him. Therefore he addressed his uncle by saying in effect that he would not give up his mission but would rather continue it till Allah made it a success or he himself perished in the process. As he uttered these words he was so moved with emotion that tears filled his eyes and he turned to leave the room. His demeanour and determination stirred 'Abû Ṭâlib's affection. He called back the Prophet, comforted him and told him to go on doing his work, assuring him that he ('Abû Ṭâlib) would never abondon him nor give him up to his enemies.[2]

This account of the second Quraysh deputation to 'Abû Ṭâlib brings into proper relief both his difficulty and attitude on the one hand, and the Prophet's determination to carry on his mission against all odds, on the other. The Prophet's address to his uncle suggests, as indicated earlier, that the Quraysh leaders had most probably combined their ultimatum with a reiteration of their offer of wealth and position to him if only he abandoned his mission.

V. ATTEMPTS TO KILL THE PROPHET

The Quraysh leaders now hit upon a new plan to get rid of the Prophet without running the risk of a bloody and internecine conflict. Acting upon the well-known rule of tribal justice to offer a man for a man the Quraysh leaders decided to give one of their best youths to 'Abû Ṭâlib and in

1. *Ibid.*, 284.
2. *Ibid.*

exchange to take the person of the Prophet for their doing with him whatever they liked to do. Accordingly one day they took with them 'Umrah ibn al-Walîd ibn al-Mughîrah, son of one of their prominent leaders and said to be the strongest and most handsome of the Quraysh youths. They went to 'Abû Ṭâlib and asked him to accept 'Umrah as a son, derive benefit from his assistance and intelligence and, in exchange, to surrender the Prophet to them so that they could kill him and put an end to all the troubles, adding that his ('Abû Ṭâlib's) nephew had not only turned against his and his forefathers' religion but had also caused dissension among the people and befooled their forbearance. As the Quraysh leaders finshed their proposal 'Abû Ṭâlib indignantly replied: "You have indeed come forward with a very bad and unjust deal. You ask me to feed and maintain your son for you, and in return to surrender to you my son so that you may kill him. By Allah I shall never agree to that." At this reply one of the Quraysh leaders, Muṭ'im ibn 'Adîyy ibn Nawfal, attempted to pacify and persuade 'Abû Ṭâlib by saying that it was but a just proposal to offer a man for a man and that the Quraysh leaders were only trying to extricate him from a situation which he himself did not like, but it appeared that he was not amenable to any reasonable proposal. 'Abû Ṭâlib firmly rejected the argument and plainly told them that he would never surrender the Prophet so they could do whatever they liked.[1]

It may be noted that it was of course a recognized rule of tribal justice to offer and take a life for a life and thus avoid prolonged blood-feud; but the Quraysh leaders' proposal did not quite conform to that rule. Their proposal was not only preemptive; it also fell far short of the requirements of the rule. They offered their man not to be killed, but only to be adopted as a son by 'Abû Ṭâlib, whereas they wanted to take the Prophet not for adopting him as a son but professedly to kill him. Hence 'Abû Ṭâlib's reply that it was a very unjust proposal was quite correct.

The incident is significant in three important respects. It shows the extent of the Quraysh leaders' enmity and determination to kill the Prophet, making it also clear that they did not make any secret of their intention. The fact that they offered in exchange the son of one of their prominent leaders, Al-Walîd ibn al-Mughîrah, only highlights the seriousness of this determination of theirs. Secondly, the incident illustrates the growth of a combination of all the other clans against the Prophet and Banû Hâshim. Thirdly, it equally

1. Ibn Hishâm, I, 285-286.

illustrates the determination of 'Abû Ṭâlib and Banû Hâshim in general to defend the Prophet and their defiance of the combination of the other clans. Henceforth, as Ibn Isḥâq states, the situation became very tense and both the sides were clearly on a confrontation and war course.[1] In fact Ibn Isḥaq notes two specific developments that followed the incident. On the one hand the Quraysh clans now all and each turned against the Muslums and followers of the Prophet from among the members of their respective clans and started a severe campaign of persecution and torture upon them in order to make them recant and return to the old faith.[2] It further appears from subsequent events [3] that these clans also disowned and withdrew their protection from the converts of their respective clans, thus throwing them beyond the pale of clan protection, to be attacked and killed by anyone. On the other hand 'Abû Ṭâlib when he saw the combination and activities of the Quraysh clans respecting the Muslims, he summoned the men of Banû Hâshim and Banû al-Muṭṭalib, fully apprised them of the situation and called upon them to defend the Prophet against the enmity and hostility of the other clans. All the members of Banû Hâshim and Banû al-Muṭṭalib, with the singular exception of 'Abû Lahab, signified their solidarilty with 'Abû Ṭâlib and undertook to defend the Prophet against all odds.[4]

While the Quraysh leaders thus openly proposed to do away with the Prophet and the men of Banû Hâshim and Banû al-Muṭṭalib equally resolved to protect him, the threat to his life continued to exist. The reports show that there were at least three other attempts made by individual opponents to kill him. One of these attempts was clearly posterior to the incident mentioned above. The other two appear to be anterior to it. It is clear, however, that though the authors of these attempts were three separate individuals, in each case the individual in question was either instigated and encouraged or engaged by the Quraysh leaders in general.

One of the two earlier attempts was made by 'Abû Jahl when the Quraysh leaders' efforts to entice the Prophet by offering him wealth and position were unsuccessful. It is reported that when the Prophet rejected their offers and left the Ka'ba compound 'Abû Jahl told the other leaders

1. Ibid., 287.
2. *Ibid.*
3. See *infra*, pp. 667-668.
4. Ibn Hisham, I, 287.

that he would no longer tolerate Muḥammad's (ﷺ) activities and his praying at the Ka'ba. 'Abû Jahl informed them of his murderous resolve that he would carry with him as heavy a block of stone as he was able to and when the Prophet came to the Ka'ba to pray and would be in prostration, he would smash his (the Prophet's) head. After that, 'Abû Jahl added, the Quraysh leaders would be free either to defend him or to surrender him to Banû Hâshim for their doing to him what they liked to do. The Quraysh leaders assured 'Abû Jahl that they would never surrender him to Banû Hâshim, so he could proceed to execute his plans. Thus encouraged and assured of support by the Quraysh leaders 'Abû Jahl indeed took a heavy stone with him on the following day and waited near the Ka'ba. The other Quraysh leaders also waited in their usual place of assemblage in the Ka'ba compound to see 'Abû Jahl's deed. The Prophet, as usual, came to the Ka'ba and engaged himself in prayer. When he went into prostration 'Abû Jahl stepped forward to strike the Prophet's head with the stone. But as he came near the Prophet, he suddenly stepped back in utter terror, his face completely bloodless and pale, his hands trembling and dropping the stone on the ground. At this unexpected sight the Quraysh leaders hastened to 'Abû Jahl and asked him what the matter was with him. He told them that as he approached the Prophet he ('Abû Jahl) saw a gigantic he-camel blocking his way and about to attack and swallow him up. "By Allah", swore Abû Jahl before the Quraysh leaders, "I have never seen such a big-shouldered, gigantic and frightful camel." Ibn Isḥâq says that the Prophet subsequently mentioned that it was the angel Jibrîl who thus frightened 'Abû Jahl away and that if he had advanced further he would have been seized and torn to pieces.[1]

The second attempt was made by 'Uqbah ibn 'Abî Mu'ayṭ. An eyewitness account [2] says that the attempt followed a couple of days' commotion and excitement among the Quraysh leaders. One day they gathered at the Ka'ba compound and started discussing about the Prophet who, according to them, had befooled their forbearance, decried their forefathers, abused their religion, caused dissension in their society and reviled their gods. They said that they had tolerated that serious affair for too long. As they were thus discussing the matter the Prophet appeared there. He went near the Ka'ba, kissed its corner (the black stone) and started circumambulating it. As he

1. Ibn Hishâm, 319-320.

2. The reporter of the account is 'Amr ibn Al-'Âṣ (ibn Wâ'il) (may Allah be pleased with him) who personally witnessed the incident.

passed by them in the first round they abused him so badly that signs of annoyance were clearly visible on his countenance. They similarly abused him as he passed by them in the second and third rounds. Consequently an altercation took place between him and them, after which he left the place. On the following day the Quraysh leaders similarly gathered at the Ka'ba compound and began to discuss about him and to abuse him. And when the Prophet came there as usual they in a body pounced upon him, surrounded him and demanded of him whether he spoke such and such about their gods. He replied in the affirmative. Thereupon one of their leaders, 'Uqbah ibn 'Abî Mu'ayṭ, jumped upon him, tied his throat with his garment and so suffocated him that he was almost at the point of death. At that moment 'Abû Bakr suddenly appeared there, forcefully pushed 'Uqbah, released the Prophet from his grasp and tearfully cried out: "Are you going to kill a man because he says: My Lord is Allah?" The reporter adds that that was the worst of what he saw the Quraysh did to the Messenger of Allah.[1]

The third attempt was made by 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭâb (r.a.) just on the eve of his conversion to Islam. It has already been seen [2] how he went out one day with his sword in hand determined to kill the Prophet. Ibn Isḥâq mentions that the Quraysh leaders had engaged 'Umar to perpetrate the nefarious deed.[3] The attempt of course failed and in its sequel 'Umar embraced Islam.

This attempt took place in the fifth or early in the sixth year of the Prophet's mission. Though 'Umar was converted to Islam the threat to the Prophet's life continued. Indeed, for the rest of the Makkan period the one absorbing aim of the Makkan opposition was to do way with him. As will be seen presently,[4] the sole purpose of the 'boycott' of Banû Hâshim, which followed shortly and which lasted for nearly three years, was to force Banû Hâshim to withdraw their protection for the Prophet and surrender him to the Quraysh leaders, The last attempt of the Quraysh leaders to kill him was made on the eve of his migration to Madina.[5] With reference to all these attempts the Qur'ân says:

1. Ibn Hishâm, I, 309-310; *Bukhârî*, no. 3856; Ibn Kathir, *Tafsîr*, IV, 77 (comment on 40:28)

2. *Supra*, pp. 532-533.

3. Ibn Isḥâq, *Al-Siyar wa al-Maghâzî*, p. 181.

4. *Infra*, Ch. XXXIII, sec, I.

5. *Infra*, pp. 868-871.

﴿وإذ يمكر بك الذين كفروا ليثبتوك أو يقتلوك أو يخرجوك ويمكرون ويمكر الله والله خير الماكرين﴾ (٨ : ٣٠)

"And (remember) when the unbelievers plotted against you, to get hold of you or to kill you or to expel you. They plot and plan; and Allah also plans, and Allah is the greatest of all planners." (8:30).

CHPTER XXVIII

THE MIGRATION TO ABYSSINIA

1. THE BACKGROUND

By the beginning of the fifth year of the mission a few things had become quite clear. In the first place, the leaders of the opposition had succeeded in forming a combination of all the Makkan clans except Banû Hâshim (with Banû al-Muṭṭalib) against the Prophet and the Muslims. Secondly, having failed to suppress the movement by sheer persecution of the poorer and weaker converts and having also failed to make the Prophet agree to a compromise the leaders had resolved upon killing him. Not only that, they had even made their resolution known and had, according to the prevailing notions of tribal justice, offered a young man as substitute for him to 'Abû Ṭâlib in an attempt to persuade him to surrender the Prophet to them. Thirdly, in the face of these developements Banû Hâshim and Banû al-Muṭṭalib stood united under 'Abû Ṭâlib's leadership to protect the Prophet, no mater whether any of them embraced Islam or not. Fourthly, it was equally clear that as against this attitude of Banû Hâshim the hostile combination did not dare engage in a direct and armed conflict with them obviously because no easy victory and quick end of the dispute were in sight. This means that Banû Hâshim with Banû al-Muṭṭalib were alone quite a match for all the other clans combined. Fifthly, and arising out of this last mentioned fact, the hostile combination had decided to check the progress of Islam and, if possible, to stamp it out by each clan's dealing more rigorously with the converts from among its members. It may be noted that previously also each clan used to punish those of its members who embraced Islam; but the new policy was distinguished by the fact that now each clan of the hostile combination withdrew its protection from its dissident members, excommunicated them and expelled them from its fold. This measure had very serious consequences for the converts, specially those who belonged to well-to-do and respectable families. For all of a sudden they found themselves rootless, without any social and personal protection and liable to be maltreated or killed with impunity by anyone. Their position became similar to that of statelessness in modern times. It became extremely difficult, or rather impossible, for them to continue to live in that state in their own society. This fact explains why it was mainly the converts of respectable and wealthy families,

and not the very poor and helpless converts, who, as will be seen presently, were the ones to migrate to abyssinia.

That this new method of opposition had been put in force about that time is evident from the facts that even a person like 'Abû Bakr (r.a.) had to obtain the protection of a non-Quraysh chief (Ibn al-Dughunnah) in order to stay at Makka[1] and that 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭab (r.a.), who embraced Islam shortly afterwards, had to seek and receive the protection of a strong man of another clan, Al-'Âṣ ibn al-Wa'il of Banû Sahm, in order to save himself from being heckled and assaulted by the Makkan populace.[2] Also, when a number of emigrants to Abyssinia returned to Makka for a short while, each of them had to obtain the protection of someone of another clan although all of them belonged to respectable families and clans.[3] Before these instances we do not hear of anyone's seeking protection with a person of another clan.

This situation provides the background to the migration Abyssinia. Ibn Isḥâq distinctly states that when the Prophet saw that while he himself was being protected by his own clan, his followers were being disowned and oppressed by their respective clans and he himself was unable to help the Muslims, he gave them a signal for migration to Abyssinia.[4] In fact he received several revelations indicating the need for the Muslims' migrating to another land for the sake of their faith. One significant revelation of the time runs as follows:

﴿يـٰعبادىَ الذين ءامنوا إن أرضى وٰسعة فإيّـٰى فاعبدون * كلّ نفس ذآئِقة الموت ثم إلينا ترجعون * والذين ءامنوا وعملوا الصـٰلحـٰت لنبوئنهم من الجنة غرفا تجرى من تحتها الانهـٰر خـٰلدين فيها نعم أجر العـٰملين * الذين صبروا وعلىٰ ربهم يتوكّلون * وكأيّن من دآبّة لّا تحمل رزقها الله يرزقها وإياكم وهو السميع العليم﴾ (٢٩:٥٦-٦٠)

"O My servants who believe, verily My earth is spacious. So Me alone you do worship. Every individual is to taste death; and then to Me you shall all be brought back. Those who believe and do good deeds, I shall of surety assign them abodes in paradise, beneath which flow springs, to abide therein for ever. How excellent is the reward of those who do good deeds — those who bear with patience and put their trust in their Lord! How many are the creatures that do not carry their provisions with them! Allah feeds them and you too. He is All-Hearing and All-knowing." (29:56-60)

1. *Infra*, pp. 675-676.
2. *Supra*, p. 534.
3. *Infra*, 672-673.
4. Ibn Hishâm, I, 321.

The passage emphasizes that Muslims should under no circumstances compromise on the issue of *tawḥîd* and should continue to worship Allah alone at all costs, if necessary even by abandoning their birthplace and migrating to another land, for Allah's earth is spacious. Also they should not be afraid to risk their lives for the sake of their faith in Allah; for every individual is to die at one time or other and ultimately everyone shall be brought back to his Lord. They should not be dissuaded from following the right course by their love for hearth and home; for Allah will amply reward them in the hereafter with the choicest of hearth and home to abide therein for ever. Nor should the Muslims worry about their means of livelihood in a foreign land; for so many of the creatures of the world do not carry their provisions with them. It is Allah who provides for them as well as for men.[1]

There were other revelations too preparing the mind of the Muslims for migration. One of them is *sûrat Maryam* (XIX) which gave them an insight into the story of Prophet 'Îsâ (Jesus), peace be on him, and his mission. It stood them in good stead, as will be seen presently, when they were in Abyssinia. Another was a peiece of practical advice about how to deal with the People of the Book in general.[2] When the Prophet received such indications about the need for the Muslims to migrate to another land he told his followers about it and pointed out to them that there was the land of Abyssinia where a just king ruled and under whom none was wronged, adding that the Muslims could continue to live there until Allah provided a better opening for them.[3]

II. WHY ABYSSINIA?

The choice of Abyssinia was no doubt suggested by the prevailing international situation, particularly the state of relationship between the Byzantine and the Persian Empires. These two powerful northern neighbours of Arabia had at that time been involved in a prolonged and deadly armed conflict. In 603, some seven years before the Prophet's call, the Byzantine throne was usurped by Phocus whose cruelty and ruthlesseness soon alienated all sectinos of the population from him. Taking advantage of this situation the Persain Emperor Khusraw Parwez declared war against the Byzantine ruler and, after inflicting a series of defeat upon his forces,

1. See Al-Ṭabarî, *Tafsîr*, 21/10-11.
2. i.e., Q. 29:46.
3. Ibn Hishâm, I, 321-322.

advanced into Syria. In 614 Parwez occoupied Jerusalem. The Makkan unbelievers, who sympathized with Persia, were elated with joy at this success of Parwez. They started taunting the Muslims, by saying that as the devotees of the gods of good and evil (*Ahura Mazda* and *Ahura Man*) had defeated the Christian forces, similarly the devotees Al-Lât and Al-'Uzzâ would overcome the Muslims.[1] In this context came the revelation of the initial passage of *sûrat al-Rûm* (XXX) which runs as follows:

﴿الٓمٓ * غلبت الروم * في أدنى الأرض و هم من بعد غلبهم سيغلبون * في بضع سنين لله الأمر من قبل ومن بعد ويومئذ يفرح المؤمنون * بنصر الله ينصر من يشاء وهو العزيز الرحيم﴾(٣٠ :١-٥)

"Alif-Lâm-Mîm. The Romans (Byzantines) have been defeated in the hither land, but they, after their defeat, will soon be victorious, in less then ten years. For decision lies with Allah, initially as well as subsequently. And on that day the Believers shall rejoice at the victory given (them) by Allah. He helps whomsoever He wills; and He is the Most Mighty, the Most Merciful"(30:1-5)

The passage graphically portrays the situation, as well between the Byzantines and the Persians as between the believers and the unbelievers at Makka. It also predicts very clearly that within less then ten years the Byzantines would turn the table upon the Persians and simultaneously the Muslims too would achieve victory by Allah's grace. The prediction came true exactly within the period speciefied; for in 624 A.C. the Byzantines, under their new ruler Heraclius, inflicted a decisive defeat upon the Persians and the same year the Muslims similarly obtained their first major victory at Badr.

For the time being, however, victory was not in sight either of the Byzantines or of the Muslims; and there was no question of the latter's seeking refuge towards the north. Hence they turned their attention to the only non-idolatrous country in the south, namely Abyssinia. It was also a land with which the Quraysh, particularly Banû Hâshim and Banû al-Muṭṭalib, had been carrying on trade for a long time.

III. THE FIRST BATCH OF EMIGRANTS

Accordingly, under the direction of the Prophet, some 15 or 16 Muslims including 4 ladies slipped away from Makka in the month of Rajab of the fifth year of the mission, corresponding to 615 A.C. The Quraysh leaders gave them a hot pursuit; but they were lucky to get a boat at the port

1. See *Musnad*, I, 276, 304; *Tirmidhî* (*Tuḥfat al-'Aḥwadhî*, pp. 51-54) nos. 3245-3246; Ibn Kathîr, *Tafsîr*, VI, p. 304; Shawkânî, *Tafsîr*, IV, 214.

Shu'aybah (modern Mocha) and left for Abyssinia just before their pursuers got to the spot. According to Ibn Isḥâq the following were the first group who migrated to Abyssinia.[1]

1. 'Uthmân ibn 'Affân (of Banû 'Umayyah)
2. Ruqayyah bint Râsul Allah (wife of the above, of Banû Hâshim)
3. 'Abû Ḥudhayfah ibn 'Utbah ibn Rabi'ah (of Banû 'Abd Shams ibn 'Abd Manâf)
4. Sahlâh bint Suhayl ibn 'Amr (wife of the above, of Banû 'Âmir ibn Lu'ayy)
5. Al-Zubayr ibn al-'Awwâm (of Banû Asad ibn 'Abd al-'Uzzâ ibn Quṣayy, Khadîjah's nephew and son of the Prophet's paternal aunt)
6. Mus'ab ibn 'Umayr (of Banû 'Abd al-Dâr ibn Quṣayy)
7. 'Abd al-Raḥmân ibn 'Awf (of Banû Zuhrah ibn Kilâb)
8. 'Abû Salamah ibn 'Abd al-Asad (of Banû Makhzûm)
9. 'Umm Salamah (wife of the above, of Banû Makhzûm)
10. 'Uthmân ibn Maẓ'ûm (of Banû Jumaḥ, maternal uncle of *'Umm al-Mu'minin* Ḥafṣah)
11. 'Âmîr ibn Rabî'ah al-'Anazî (confederate of Banû 'Adiyy)
12. Laylâ bint 'Abî Ḥathmah (wife of the above, of Banû 'Adiyy)
13. 'Abû Sabrah ibn 'Abî Ruhm (of Banû 'Âmir ibn Lu'ayy)
14. Suhayl ibn Bayḍâ' (of Banû al-Ḥârith ibn Fihr)

Ibn Sa'd and Al-Ṭabarî add two more names to the list. They are:

15. Ḥâṭib ibn 'Amr ibn 'Abd Shams
16. 'Abd Allah ibn Mas'ûd (confederate of Banû Zahrah)[2]

Ibn Isḥâq furher states that subsequently Ja'far ibn 'Abî Ṭâlib joined the group.[3]

The list shows that almost all the emigrants were from among important clans and families. Their number and the inclusion in the group of the wives of some of them indicate that they did not go to the land on purely or primarily diplomatic purpose; though on arrival there they remained at or near

1. Ibn Hishâm, I, 322-323.
2. Ibn Sa'd, I, 204; Al-Ṭabari, *Târikh*, II, 330 (I/1183)
3. Ibn Hishâm, I, 323.

the court of the Abyssinian ruler. This was only natural; for they went seeking refuge there. So they got in touch with the ruler's court at the earliest opportunity after their arrival in the land. According to the reports of some of the emigrants themselves, they were not only allowed to stay there peacefully but also no hindrance was placed on their belief and worship. Nor were they harassed by words or deeds.

IV. TEMPORARY RETURN OF THE EMIGRANTS

The emigrants continued to stay in Abyssinia peacefully for a couple of months. Towards the end of that period a rumour reached them that the Quraysh leaders had embraced Islam and the enmity between them and the Prophet had ceased. What caused the rumour is discussed separately below.[1] On the basis of that rumour, however, all or most of the emigrants left Abyssinia in the month of Shawwâl of that very year. According to Ibn Sa'd all the emigrants returned;[2] but Ibn Isḥâq says that some of them remained in Abyssinia.[3] When the returnees reached the vicinity of Makka they were informed, on enquiry, by a man of Banû Kinânah that the rumour was untrue.[4] After some hesitation, however, they decided to enter Makka, each after having obtained suitable protection of someone. It is stated that only 'Abd Allah ibn Mas'ûd entered the city without obtaining anyone's protection and after staying there for sometime went back to Abyssinia.[5]

The list of returnees, together with the 'protector' of each, is as follows:

Names of returnees	"Protectors"
1. 'Uthmân ibn 'Affân	'Abû 'Uḥayḥah (Sa'd ibn al-'Âṣ)
2. 'Abû Ḥudhayfah ibn 'Utbah ibn Rabi'ah	'Umayyah ibn Khalaf
3. Al-Zubayr ibn Al-'Awwâm	Zam'ah ibn Al-Aswad
4. Muṣ'ab ibn 'Umayr	Al-Naḍr ibn al-Ḥârith ibn Khaladah (or 'Abû'Azîz ibn 'Umayr)

1. *Infra*, Chap. XXIX.
2. Ibn Sa'd, I, 206.
3. Ibn Hishâm, I, 364.
4. Ibn Sa'd, I, 206.
5. *Ibid.*

5. 'Abd al-Raḥman ibn 'Awf	Aswad ibn Yaghûth
6. 'Âmir ibn Rabi'ah	Al-'Âṣ ibn Wa'il
7. 'Abû Sabrah ibn Abî Ruhm	Akhnas ibn Sharîq
8. Ḥâṭib ibn 'Amr	Ḥuwayrith ibn 'Abd al-'Uzzâ
9. Suhayl ibn Bayḍâ' [1]	
10. 'Uthmân ibn Maẓ'ûn	Al-Walîd ibn al-Mughîrah
11. 'Abû Salamah	'Abû Ṭâlib

Regarding 'Uthmân ibn Maẓ'ûn (no.10) it is stated that when he found that while he was living peacefully under Al-Walîd's protection and the other Muslims were being persecuted and tortured he felt ashamed of his conduct. Therefore he openly renounced Al-Walîd's protection in front of an assemblage of the Quraysh at the Ka'ba. Thereupon a man of Al-Walîd's clan assaulted 'Uthmân, but the assailant was dealt a blow by a supporter of 'Uthmân.[2] The fracas did not however proceed further.

Regarding 'Abû Salamah it is stated that his own clan, Banû Makhzûm, objected to his being protected by 'Abû Ṭâlib, saying that while he had every right to give protection to his nephew (i.e. the Prophet) he had no right to extend his protection to a man of Banû Makhzûm. 'Abû Ṭâlib resolutely defended his action saying that if he could give protection to his brother's son, he could with equal justice do so with regard to his sister's son. It may be noted that 'Abû Salamah's mother Barrah bint 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib was 'Abû Ṭalib's sister (and the Prophet's aunt). The leaders of Banû Makhzûm were bent upon making a quarrel with 'Abû Ṭalib over the matter; but at that time 'Abû Lahab intervened, and it appears for once in his life, in favour of 'Abû Ṭalib's policy of supporting the Prophet. 'Abû Lahab plainly told the Makhzumite leaders that they had gone too far in harassing the Shaykh ('Abû Ṭalib) and if they proceeded further he ('Abu Lahab) would definitely stand up in his defence. Fearing that 'Abû Lahab might at last throw in his lot fully with his clan the Makhzûmites placated him with sweet words and withdrew.[3]

1. It is reported that he remained secretively in Makka for sometime and then returned to Abyssinia.
2. Ibn Hishâm, I, 370
3. Ibn Hishâm, I, 371.

It is noteworthy the most of those who came forward as 'protectors' for the returnees were the very leaders who had been instrumental in effecting the coalition of the clans against the Muslims. What motives led them to play this sort of double role can only be guessed. Probably the opposition leaders were eager to get back amidst them their own kiths and kin but did not at the same time want to reverse the policy of each clan disowning the Muslims from among its own members. The difficulty was therefore circumvented by an individual leader's coming forward as protector for the son or relative of the leader of another clan. The assumption applies very strongly to the case of 'Utbah ibn Rabî'ah's son ('Abû Ḥudhayfah) who was 'protected' by 'Umayyah ibn Khalaf. Alternatively, the leaders probably wanted to demonstrate that their enmity was mainly against the Prophet and not against the converts as such and thus indirectly to weaken their attachment to him. The leaders might even have been actuated by an ulterior motive of getting within their grasp the returnees in order to bring pressure on them to renounce Islam. In any case, their offering protection to converts not belonging to their own clans was in contrast with their objection to 'Abû Ṭalib's offering protection to a member of another clan. However, the fact that Banû Hâshim, particularly 'Abû Ṭâlib, offered protection not only to the Prophet but also to a member of Banû Makhzûm ('Abû Salamah) shows that they were both physically and psychologically strong enough to face the opposition of the other Quraysh clans combined.

IV. THE SECOND PHASE OF MIGRATION TO ABYSSINIA

The position of the Muslims, however, did not remain tenable for any length of time. A fresh wave of persecution was launched by the unbelieving leaders upon the humbler section of converts so much so that, as noted above, persons like 'Uthmân ibn Maẓ'ûn felt guilty within themselves for having accepted the protection of unbelieving leaders. As the situation continued to deteriorate there began a second phase of migration to Abyssinia. Not that the Muslims went in a body and at a time to that land; but they went there in successive groups.

According to Ibn Sa'd a total of some 80 males and 18 females (11 Qurayshites and 7 non-Qurayshites) ultimately found shelter in Abyssinia. He further says that 'Ammâr ibn Yâsir was among the emigrants; but this is doubted by others including Ibn Isḥâq and Al-Wâqidî. Similarly with regard to 'Abû Mûsâ al-'Ash'arî there is a difference of opinion. According to

some reports he also migrated to Abyssinia; but it appears from his own statement that he, along with 52 or 55 Muslims of his tribe, started by boat from Yaman to join the Prophet; but the boat was blown away by wind to Abyssinia where he joined Ja'far ibn 'Abî Ṭâlib and the other emigrants there and then returned with them to the Prophet after the victory at Khaybar.[1] Again, with regard to 'Uthmân ibn 'Affân, his wife Ruqayyah bint Rasûl Allah, 'Abû Ḥudhayfah and his wife Sahlah bint Suhayl ibn 'Amr, it is stated by Al-Ṭabari that they stayed at Makka;[2] but this statement does not appear to be correct; for Ibn Isḥâq mentions them not only among those who migrated to Abyssinia for the second time but also in the list of the 33 males and 8 females who returned to Makka shortly before the Prophet's migration to Madina.[3]

That the situation at Makka had become really critical for the Muslims is evident also from the fact that even 'Abû Bakr, with the Prophet's permission, started for migrating to Abyssinia. When he reached Bark al-Ghimâd, a place at some " five days' distance" from Makka towards Yaman, he came across Ibn al-Dughunnah (or Ibn al-Daghina), the chief of the Qara tribe and a leader of Al-'Aḥâbîsh.[4] He enquired of 'Abû Bakr about his destination. He replied that he had been maltreated by his people who had made his life miserable and had actually expelled him, so he was migrating to another land. On hearing this Ibn al-Dughunnah expressed his surprise and remarked that a good, generous and well-mannered person like 'Abû Bakr should not have been maltreated by his people nor did it behove them to expel such an "ornament" of the society. Ibn al-Dughunnah did not leave the matter there. He persuaded 'Abû Bakr to retrace his steps and to return to Makka, undertaking to stand security for him. 'Abû Bakr did so, being accompanied by Ibn al-Dughunnah. On reaching Makka the latter publicly announced his having taken 'Abû Bakr under his 'protection' and warned everyone not to do any harm to him ('Abû Bakr). The Quraysh leaders did not dare disregard the protection given by the Al-'Aḥâbîsh leader but sti-

1. *Bukhârî*, no. 4230.

2. Al-Ṭabarî, *Târîkh*, II, 340 (I/1194)

3. Ibn Hishâm, I, 324, 379.

4. *Al-'Aḥâbîsh* was the name given to the members of an alliance of Banû al-Ḥarith ibn 'Abd Manât ibn Kinânah, Banû al-Hûn ibn Khuzâmah ibn Mudrikah and Banû al-Muṣṭaliq. They were so called because they entered into the alliance at a valley near Makka called Al-'Aḥbash.

pulated that 'Abû Bakr should only pray in his own house and not recite the Qur'ân publicly, thus attracting their children and womenfolk to the new faith. Ibn Al-Dughunnah and 'Abû Bakr both accepted the condition. 'Abû Bakr, however, shortly afterwards built a mosque within the boundary of his homestead and began to pray and recite the Qur'ân therein. The Quraysh leaders objected to this action on 'Abû Bakr's part and raised the matter with the Al-'Aḥâbîsh leader. By that time, however, the situation had changed somewhat and 'Abû Bakr gave up Ibn al-Dughunnah's protection.[1]

A fairly comprehensive list of those who thus betook themselves to Abyssinia in the second phase of the migration is given by Ibn Isḥâq.[2] It is clear from the list that there was no clan and no family in Makka who were not affected more or less by the migration and whose sons, daughters, nephews, nieces, sons-in law, brothers, sisters and other near relatives had not left their homes for their conscience's sake. Even the prominent opposition leaders were very closely affected. For instance 'Abû Jahl's brother Salamah ibn Hishâm, cousin Hishâm ibn 'Abî Ḥudhayfah, cousin and uterine brother 'Ayyâsh ibn 'Abî Rabî'ah, cousin sister 'Umm Salamah, 'Abû Sufyân's daughter 'Umm Ḥabîbah, 'Utbah ibn Rabî'ah's son 'Abû Ḥudhayfah and Suhayl ibn 'Amr's brother, sons, daughters and sons-in-law were among those who migrated to Abyssinia. The other leaders also were similarly affected.

VI. THE QURAYSH DEPUTATION TO ABYSSINIA FOR GETTING EXTRADITION OF THE EMIGRANTS

Naturally the situation stirred the Quraysh leaders to their depth. Henceforth some turned more stern and hostile in their attitude to the Muslims and Islam, while some others reacted in a different way and became somewhat soft in their attitude to the new faith. All were at one, however, on the need to make their supreme effort to get the emigrants back from Abyssinia. The more hostile among the leaders, as Ibn Isḥâq specifically mentions, were actuated by the motive of persecuting the emigrants, on their return, into recanting the new faith.[3]

The efforts of the Quraysh leaders in this respect, particularly the activities of their envoys to the Abyssinian ruler are best recorded in the reports of

1. *Bukhârî*, no. 3905; Ibn Hishâm, I, 372-374.
2. *Ibid.*, 323-330.
3. *Ibid.* 333. Ibn Isḥâq's words are: (يردهم عليهم، ليفتنوهم في دينهم)

'Umm al-Mu'minîn 'Umm Salamah, 'Abd Allah ibn Mas'ûd, 'Abû Mûsâ al-'Ash'arî and Ja'far ibn 'Abî Ṭâlib (r.a.), all of whom were among the emigrants and were their spokesmen at the Abyssinian court. These reports corroborate one another in all essential respects, differing only in some minor matters of detail. The summary of 'Umm Salamah's acount is as follows:

The Quraysh leaders sent two of their seasoned and experienced diplomats, 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abî Rabî'ah ('Abû Jahl's uterine brother) and 'Amr ibn Al-'Âṣ ibn Wa'îl (of Banû Sahm) to the Abyssinian ruler with a profusion of the choicest of presents for the latter and his courtiers. On their arrival the two diplomats first contacted the principal courtiers and high officials, distributed the presents intended for them and thus made them agree unanimously to support the Quraysh leaders' prayer for extradition of the emigrants. Next the Quraysh envoys met the Negus (i.e. Abyssinian ruler), gave him the presents and addressed him saying that some foolish and recalcitrant youths of their nation had fled the country and had taken shelter in his land. They had abandoned their forefathers' religion but had adopted neither the religion which the Negus and his people professed nor any other known religion of the world, but had made a religion of their own. As soon as the diplomats finished their address the courtiers all in one voice and according to previously made arrangement supported the request for extradition, adding that the fugitives' own people knew them best and that such elements should not be entertained and given shelter in the country. The Negus, however, disagreed with his courtiers and told them that those who had fled from their own country and taken shelter in his dominion should at first be given a chance to explain their position and to present their case. Accordingly they were summoned to attend the court on a fixed day. On receiving the king's summons the emigrants discussed the matter among themselves and unanimously decided to tell the ruler all about the Prophet's teachings without any reservation, whether the Negus allowed them to stay in his land or not. When the Muslims attended the court on the appointed day the Negus asked them why they had abandoned their ancestral religion and, instead of embracing any other religion had made a new religion for themselves and what it was about. On behalf of the Muslims Ja'far ibn 'Abî Ṭâlib addressed the court. He pointed out the social and moral conditions of the Arabs prior to the Prophet's advent and also gave an account of his main teachings. He also detailed the persecutions and oppressions of the Quraysh leaders upon the Muslims and ended his address by saying that those oppressed people,

instead of going to another country, had selected to take refuge in the Negus's kingdom because of their confidence that there they would not meet with any injustice. The Abyssinian ruler was impressed by Ja'far's address and asked him to recite some of what he said had been revealed by God to the Prophet. Thereupon Ja'far recited to him the first part of *sûrat Maryam* (no. 19). The Negus was so moved on hearing the recitation that tears rolled down his cheeks. Many of his courtiers were similarly moved. When the recitation was over he remarked that what he had just heard and what Jesus had brought must have had emanated from the same source. He then said that he would not surrender the immigrants to their contrymen.

'Umm Salamh adds that of the two Quraysh envoys 'Abd Allah was somewhat soft towards the Muslims but 'Amr ibn Al-'Âṣ was uncompromising in his attitude. He planned to make another attempt with the Negus and thought that if he was requested to ask the Muslims about their beliefs regarding Jesus and if he (the Negus) came to know that he would not tolerate the emigrants' existence in his land. 'Abd Allah attempted to dissuade 'Amr from doing so; but he was determined to do it. Accordingnly he approached the Negus on the following day and prayed him to ask the Muslims about their views on Jesus, adding that they had very objectionable opinions regarding him. The Muslims had already come to know about 'Amr ibn Al-'Âṣ's design.[1] Accordingnly they once again had a consultation amongst themselves and had once again decided to speak out the truth and to state frankly and fearlessly Allah's revelation and the Prophet's teachings about Jesus. When, therefore, they were required to attend the court again and when the king asked them about their belief regarding Jesus, Ja'far unhesitatingly replied that he (Jasus) was a servant of Allah, and a spirit and a word from him which He had bestowed upon the virgin Mary. On hearing this reply the Negus remarked that Jesus was indeed no more than that. The clerics at his court attempted to raise some objections to this view; but he overruled them. He next ordered the presents given by the Quraysh leaders to be returned to their envoys, dismissed the latter from his court and permitted the Muslims to stay in his country without any fear of molestation from any quarter.[2]

1. Most probably 'Abd Allah gave the Muslims an inkling of 'Amr's next move; or else they were not likely to know about it.

2. Ibn Hishâm, I, pp. 333-338.

According to the report of 'Abd Allah ibn Mas'ûd the Negus, after having listened to Ja'far's speech and his recitation of the Qur'ân, believed in Islam and the Prophet and remarked that it was about the coming of the Prophet that the Bible and Jesus had prophesied. The Negus is further said to have stated that had he not been engrossed in the affairs of state he would have gone to Makka and would have waited on the Prophet. Of similar import is the report of 'Abû Mûsâ al-'Ash'arî. The report of Ja'far ibn 'Abî Ṭâlib further corroborates the reports mentioned above and adds that the Negus, after hearing both the sides, asked the Quraysh envoys whether the emigrants were their slaves and whether they owed any money to the Quraysh leaders. To both the questions the envoys replied in the negative. Thereupon the Negus told them that then they should leave the Muslims alone and should return to their country. That the Negus had believed and embraced Islam is further evident from the report which says that when the news of his death reached the Prophet he prayed for him.[1]

VII. SIGNIFICANCE AND SEQUEL

The migration to Abyssinia and its sequel had far-reaching and momentous consequences. The sincerity and determination of the young men and women who unhestitatingly left their mother-land, hearth, home and relatives and imposed exile upon themselves for the sake of their faith must have made an impression upon the unbelieving Quraysh leaders. Their failure to procure the surrender and extradition of the emigrants added a sense of defeat to their bewilderment. They must have come to realize that the breach between them and those kiths and kin of theirs over the issue of faith was complete and irreversible. If the obstinate Makkan leaders had not yet realized that their policy of persecution had started backfiring and that the very men who had thus taken a leap into the dark for the sake of their faith would not hesitate also to lay down their lives for the same cause, they (the Quraysh leaders) were to realize it before long. The Abyssinian migration was the beginning of the failure of the policy of persecution and torture upon the Muslims .

The migration to Abyssinia also clearly signifies that the Prophet and the Muslims had already started looking beyond the confines of their native city or native land. Those who went to Abyssinia were not fugitives or refugees in the usual senses of the terms. They had of course left behind them all their

1. *Bukhârî*, nos. 3877-3881.

belongings and attachments; but they had carried with them the message and the ideas that inspired them, the light that enkindled their inner and outer selves and the spirit that propelled them into the unknown. They were the very first emissaries of Islam to foreign lands. The Abyssinian migration was indeed the beginning of Islam as a world faith.

Nor was the impression of their act upon the land of the emigrants' new abode the less important. The spectacle of nearly a hundred men and women of the rich and mercantile families and clans of Makka, who were not quite unknown to the informed and intelligent sections of the Abyssinian population, leaving their homes, possessions and relations for the sake of a new faith and taking shelter in a foreign land must have aroused the interest and curiosity of the host population. The matter thus could not have come to an end just by the departure of the Quraysh envoys for Makka. Talk of the unusual refugees must have passed from mouth to mouth and the ideas and teachings they carried with them and for the sake of which they had sacrificed everything from a worldly point of view must have been transmitted from mind to mind, particularly among the thoughtfull and the religious. An upshot of this natural process was the coming of a delegation of some 20 Christian worthies to Makka on a fact-finding mission. It is on record that on coming to Makka they met the Prophet and had a detailed discussion with him on the new faith and its teachings. The Prophet explained Islam to them, recited some parts of the Qur'ân to them, as was his wont in respect of every enquirer, and called upon them to embrace Islam. They were convinced of the truth of the new faith and accepted it. It is further on record that when they left the Prophet's presence 'Abû Jahl and some of his companions intercepted them on the way and taunted them by saying that although their countrymen had sent them to find out the facts they, instead of reporting back to their people, had abandoned their ancestral religion and had embraced the new religion. The Abyssinians replied to 'Abû Jahl with all modesty, saying that they had come to find the truth, not to insist on ignorance and falsehood and that they should therefore be left alone to go their own way.[1] It is said that this incident is alluded to in Q. 28:52-53.[2]

The emigrants continued to stay in Abyssinia peacefully for a long time.

1. Ibn Hishâm, I, 391-392.

2. See for instance Ibn Kathîr, *Tafsîr,* VI, 254. This report mentions 70 as the number of the delegation.

Some of them, numbering about forty, returned at different times to Makka before the Prophet's migration to Madina. The others stayed there for a longer period and joined the Prophet after the victory at Khaybar. Those who returned to Makka before the migration to Madina were:

1. 'Uthmân ibn 'Affân
2. Ruqayyah bint Rasûl Allah (wife of the above)
3. 'Abû Ḥudhayfah ibn 'Utbah ibn Rabî'ah
4. Sahlah bint Suhayl ibn 'Amr (wife of the above)
5. 'Abd Allah ibn Jaḥsh
6. 'Utbah ibn Ghazwân
7. Al-Zubayr ibn al-'Awwâm
8. Mus'ab ibn 'Umayr
9. Suwaybit ibn Sa'd ibn Ḥarmalah
10. Ṭulayb ibn 'Umayr
11. 'Abd al-Raḥmân ibn 'Awf
12. Miqdâd ibn 'Amr
13. 'Abd Allah ibn Mas'ûd
14. 'Abû Salamah
15. 'Umm Salamah (wife of the above)
16. Shammâs ibn 'Uthmân
17. Salamah ibn Hishâm
18. 'Ayyâsh ibn 'Abî Rabî'ah
19. Mu'aṭṭeb ibn 'Awf
20. 'Uthman ibn Maẓ'ûn
21. Al-Sa'îb ibn 'Uthmân ibn Maẓ'ûn (son of th above)
22. Qudâmah ibn Maẓ'ûn (brother of no.20)
23. 'Abd Allah ibn Maẓ'ûn (" " ")
24. Khunays ibn Ḥudhâfah
25. Hishâm ibn Al-'Âṣ ibn Wâ'il
26. 'Âmir ibn Rabî'ah
27. Laylâ bint 'Abî Ḥathmah (wife of the above)

28. 'Abd Allah ibn Makhramah
29. 'Abd Allah ibn Suhayl ibn 'Amr
30. 'Abû Sabrah ibn 'Abî Ruhm
31. 'Umm Kulthûm bint Suhayl ibn 'Amr (wife of the above and sister of no. 29)
32. Sakrân ibn 'Amr
33. Sawdah bint Zam'ah
34. Sa'd ibn Khawlah
35. 'Abû 'Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrâḥ
36. 'Amr ibn al-Ḥârith
37. Suhayl ibn Bayḍâ'
38. 'Amr ibn 'Abî Sarḥ

Of these persons no.32 died before the Prophet's migration to Madina. Nos. 17 and 25 (Salamah ibn Hishâm and Hishâm ibn Al-'Âṣ ibn Wa'îl) were captured and detained by the unbelievers and therefore could not migrate to Madina; while no. 18, 'Ayyâsh ibn Abî Rabî'ah, started for migration to Madina but was deceived by his uterine brother 'Abû Jahl and another person named Ḥârith ibn Hishâm into returning to Makka; and no.29, 'Abd Allah ibn Suhayl ibn 'Amr, was detained and so badly tortured by his father, Suhayl ibn 'Amr, that he outwardly recanted and came with the unbelievers in their campaign against the Muslims at Badr but in the midst of the battle changed sides, joined the Muslims and fought against the unbelievers. The rest of the male returnees migrated to Madina and took part in the Battle of Badr.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE SPURIOUS STORY OF THE "SATANIC VERSES"

1. SUMMARY OF THE STORY

It has been mentioned above that most of the first batch of emigrants to Abyssinia temporarily returned to Makka on the basis of a rumour of a compromise between the Quraysh leaders and the Prophet. About the reason for this rumour Al-Ṭabarî, Al-Wâqidî and some others reproduce a report in more than a dozen varying versions through as many chains of narrators[1] which say in effect that the Prophet, in view of the increasing enmity and opposition of the Quraysh leaders wished that it would be good if for the time being no further revelation came in denunciation of their gods and goddesses, or if some revelation came which would make the leaders soften down and cease their hostilities. In such a state of mind he one day went to the Ka'ba where he recited to a gathering of believers and unbelievers *sûrat al-Najm* (no. 53) which is said to have been revealed at that time. In the course of its recitation and when he uttered its *'âyahs* 19-20: "Do you see al-Lât and al-'Uzzâ, and the other third, Manât, ?" ﴿أفرءيتم اللت والعزى * ومنوة الثالثة الأخرى﴾ Satan "threw" in the recitation the couplet: "Those are the swans exalted; verily their intercession is to be expected." (تلك الغرانقة العلى وإن شفاعتهن لترجى/لترتجى). The Prophet then completed the recitation of the *sûrah* and in accordance with the behest contained in its last *'âyah* went into prostration and those present there, believers and unbelievers, also did so except an old Quraysh leader ('Umayyah ibn Khalaf or Al-Walîd ibn al-Mughîrah or 'Abû 'Umayyah) who raised a handful of dust and touched it with his forehead, saying that that would suffice for him. The Quraysh leaders are said to have given out as reason for their prostrating themselves by saying that now that the Prophet had recognized the position of the goddesses as intercessors with Allah there was in fact no point of quarrel with him. Afterwards, in the evening (some versions do not specify any time) the angel Jibrîl came to the Prophet and asked him to recite the *sûrah* which he did, still reciting the "satanic verses". Jibrîl protested, saying that those were not what had been revealed. At this the Prophet became very sad and apprehensive of Allah's wrath. Thereupon two separate passages, 17:73-75 and 22:52 were revealed[2] in reassuring the Prophet and the "satanic verses" were repealed. The Quraysh leaders became angry and renewed their enmity and opposition

1. See Al-Ṭabarî, *Tafsîr*, pt.XVII, pp. 186-190 where most of the versions are given.
2. Some versions of the report mention the revelation of only one passage, i.e., 22:52.

with increased vehemence. Meanwhile the news of their prostration and of the incident reached Abyssinia in the form of a rumour of their compromise with the Prophet.

The two passages said to have been revealed in reassuring the Prophet run as follows:

﴿وإن كادوا ليفتنونك عن الذىٓ أوحيناۤ إليك لتفترى علينا غيره، وإذا لّا تخذوك خليلا * و لولآ أن ثبتنـك لقد كدت تركن إليهم شيئا قليلا * إذا لّأذقنـك ضعف الحيوٰة وضعف الممات ثم لا تجد لك علينا نصيرا﴾ (١٧:٧٣-٧٥)

"Indeed they were about to divert you from what We revealed to you, in order that you forge against Us something else, and in that case they would certainly have taken you as a friend. And had We not made you firm, you would almost have inclined towards them a little; and in that case we would have made you taste the double (punishment) in life and double (punishment) in death; and then you would not have found for you as against Us any helper." (17:72-75)

﴿ومآ أرسلنا من قبلك من رّسول و لا نبىّ إلآ إذا تمنّىٓ ألقى الشيطـن فى أمنيّته فينسخ الله ما يلقى الشيطـن ثمّ يحكم الله ءايـته والله عليم حكيم﴾ (٢٢:٥٢)

"Never Did we send a Messenger nor a Prophet before you but that when he formed an intention Satan threw something in his intention; but Allah cancels what Satan throws in and then makes His signs pevail. Allah is All-knowing, All-Wise."(22:52)

Thus, according to the story, the Prophet was reassured. Meanwhile news of the incident reached Abyssinia in the form of a rumour of the Quraysh leaders' acceptance of Islam and of the cessation of their hostility towards the Muslims.

II. THE QUR'ÂNIC EVIDENCE AGAINST THE STORY

The story is so manifestly absurd and untrue that it ought to have been rejected outright as such and not recorded by the chroniclers and traditionists. But since some of them have recorded it, this very fact, rather than the obviously discrediting features of the story itself, has often been cited as ground for its genuineness. As Imâm Fakhr al-Dîn al-Râzî correctly points out, though this story has been noted by some commentators, those who have critically looked at it have all rejected it as spurious on the grounds of its conflict with the clear testimony of the Qur'ân, the rules governing the genuineness of traditions and the dictates of reason.

As regards the Qur'ânic evidence against the genuineness of the story it is of three kinds. First, there are a number of statements in the Qur'ân that show that neither Satan nor anyone else could interfere in the process of coming of the revelation, nor did the Prophet ever entertain any intention of

making a compromise with the unbelieving leaders, nor did he ever interpolate anything in the text of the revelation. Secondly, the passages cited as having been revealed as a sequel to the incident and for reassuring the Prophet prove to the contrary, showing that he had not made even the slightest move towards making a compromise with the unbelieving leaders. Thirdly, the internal evidence of *sûrat al-Najm* (no.53), in connection with the revelation of which the story has been foisted, goes against its spirit and purport.

The passages that directly belie the story are as follows:

﴿ ولو تقوّل علينا بعض الأقاويل * لأخذنا منه باليمين * ثم لقطعنا منه الوتين ﴾ (٦٩ : ٤٤-٤٦)

(a) "If he (the Messenger) were to invent any saying in our name, We should certainly have seized him by the right hand and We should then have surely cut off the artery of his heart." (60:44-46)."[1]

﴿ ... قل ما يكون لي أن أبدّله من تلقآي نفسيّ إن أتبع إلا ما يوحىٓ إليّ... ﴾ (١٠ : ١٥)

(b) "... Say: It is not for me, of my own accord, to change it (the revelation). I follow naught but what is revealed unto me." (10:15)

﴿ لا يأتيه البـٰطل من بين يديه ولا من خلفه تنزيل من حكيم حميد ﴾ (٤١ : ٤٢)

(c) "No falsehood can approach it from the front, nor from the rear (i.e., neither directly nor indirectly). It is a sent-down from Allah the All-Wise, the All-Praiseworthy."(41:42)

﴿ إنا نحن نزلنا الذكر وإنا له لحـٰفظون ﴾ (١٥ : ٩)

(d) "We indeed have sent down the recital (the Qur'ân) and We indeed are its Protectors (from any interference)." (15:9)

﴿ ... كذٰلك لنثبّت به فؤادك ورتلنـٰه ترتيلا ﴾ (٢٥ : ٣٢)

(e) "... In that way (We have revealed it), that We may make your heart firm thereby; and We have dictated it in stages." (25:32)

Thus the Qur'ân repeatedly says that Allah has protected it against any possibility of being tampered with directly or indirectly, that it is not for the Prophet to change it or add to it anything and that if he had done so Allah's severe punishment would inevitably and irresistibly have befallen him. These clear and positive statements directly contradict the story which says that the Prophet of his own accord or being deceived by Satan introducted something into the text of revelation. Not only that. The alleged interpolation violated the fundamental teaching of the Qur'ân, i.e., monothiesm

1. See also *supra*, pp. 436-439.

(*tawḥîd*) and thus constituted the offence of *shirk* which Allah warns elsewhere in the Qur'ân He shall under no circumstances forgive. The story is thus quite contrary to the specific statements of the Qur'ân and also to the tenor and purport of its entire text. As such the story is totally unworthy of any credence. This is not simply from a Muslim's point of view, but also from a true historian's point of view. For, to any impartial historian, the Qur'ân is the primary and the most contemporary source of information on the Prophet's life and teachings. Hence any information or statement in any other source, including the reports (tradition), that come in conflict with the primary source must not be allowed to override or supersede it.

Secondly, as regards the two passages, 17:73-74 and 22:52, that are said by the protagonists of the story to have been revealed as a sequel to the alleged incident and in reproving or consoling the Prophet, a little careful look at them would at once show that their texts, far from supporting the story, do in fact contradict it. The first passage shows that it was the unbelievers who attempted to induce the Prophet to making a compromise with them, not that he ever wanted it. The passage further states that Allah made the Prophet's heart firm against such attempts of the unbelievers and that had He not done so the Prophet would probably have been inclined towards the unbelievers' proposals a little. The emphasis here is not on the Prophet's supposed inclination towards making a compromise but on the intensity of the unbelievers' attempts on the one hand and, on the other, on Allah's special favour upon him in making him immune against such efforts. This is further emphasized by the unmistakable statement that because of such special favour on him the Prophet had not inclined towards the unbelievers even a little. The passage concludes by pointing out that had the Prophet deviated even a little, Allah would have made him taste double the punishment for such offence in this life as also in the life in the hereafter. The passage thus contradicts the story in all its essential aspects. (a) The passage says that it was the unbelievers who made attempts at inducing the Prophet to making a compromise. The story says that the Prophet , in view of the unbelievers' opposition, was eager for a compromise. (b) The passage says that Allah made the Prophet immune against such endeavours of the unbelievers so that he did not incline towards them even a little. The story would have us believe that the Prophet not only leaned towards them a little but even made a compromise with them by sacrificing and violating the very fundamental teaching of the Qur'ân as a whole. (c) The passage says that had the Prophet

been guilty of slight inclination towards the unbelievers' proposals he would have been doubly punished by Allah. The story says that the Prophet, though he committed the offence not only of slight inclination but of making a full compromise with the unbelievers, Allah nonetheless took kindly to him, silently repealed the unjustified interpolation in the text of the revelation and affectionately consoled him for his supposed repentance for his alleged pitfall. This is also in conflict, as pointed out above, with the other statements in the Qur'ân that Allah would inevitably and irresistibly have punished the Prophet if he had of his own accord added to or detracted anything from the text of the revelation.

The last statement of the passage 17:73-74 comes in conflict also with the interpretation given by the protagonists of the story to the other passage, 22:52, which they cite in support of the story. They do so by interpreting the expression *tamannâ* in this passage as "he reads or recites" and then by saying that never did a Prophet before Muḥammad (ﷺ) recite Allah's revelation except that Satan managed to "throw" something of his own ideas or words in it. The interpretation is so preposterous and revoltingly subversive of the concept of divine revelation as such that it ought never to have been suggested. The incorrectness and irrationality of putting this meaning on the term here will be shown presently. It may only be pointed out here that those who put that interpretation on the passage clearly fail to see that their interpretation glaringly contradicts the concluding statement of passage 17:73-74 as also the other statements of the Qur'ân where Allah unmistakably and uncompromisingly threatens severe punishment for the offence of tampering with His revelation even in the slightest degree. Strangely enough, these protagonists of the story not simply fail to see this contradiction. They, in their eagerness to show Allah's special affection for Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) even after his alleged pitfall, do not hesitate to affix the blame of similar pitfall on the part of all previous Messengers and Prophets!

It is, however, not on this ground alone that the interpretation of *tamannâ* here as "he reads or recites" should be adjudged wrong. Those who put this peculiar interpretation generally cite a couplet attributed to Ḥassân ibn Thâbit wherein the expression is said to bear the meaning of "reading". It is further said that the expression "then He confirms His *'âyahs* (or makes His *'âyâhs* prevail)" indicates that the allusion is here to the "reading" of the *'âyâhs*. But neither the one nor the other argument is decisive. Poems like

those of Ḥassân that are found in abundance in the works of chroniclers are not really contemporary materials but are mostly made to measure by others on the orders of authors and by them inserted in their works as compositions of contemporary poets. Also the expression "then he confirms etc." may more appropriately be taken to mean that Allah makes His "signs", i.e. words prevail.

The best guide to the meaning of the expression *tamannâ* in 22:52 is the natural meaning of the same expression or words derived from the same root as used elsewhere is the Qur'ân. There are at least 14 other places where they occur in the Qur'ân. Beginning with the very expression occuring in *sûrat al-Najm* itself, the other instances of the use of the term in the Qur'ân are as follows:

(1) ﴿ أم للإنسـن ما تمنّى ﴾ (٥٣: ٢٤)

"Or shall man have just what he fancies?" (53:24)

(2) ﴿ ولأُضلّنهم ولأُمنّينّهم ... ﴾ (٤: ١١٩)

"(Satan states) I shall certainly mislead them and shall raise (false) hopes in them" (4:119)

(3) ﴿ يعدهم ويمنّيهم وما يعدهم الشّيطـن إلا غرورا ﴾ (٤: ١٢٠)

"He makes them promises and creates (false) hopes in them; but what Satan promises is naught but deception." (4:120)

(4) ﴿ ليس بأمانيّكم ولآ أمانىّ أهل الكتـب ... ﴾ (٤: ١٢٤)

" Not your desires, nor those of the People of the Book (would) do..." (4:123)

(5) ﴿ و أصبح الذين تمنّوا مكانه بالامس يقولون ... ﴾

"And those who had coveted his position the previous day started saying..." (28:82)

(6) ﴿ و لقد كنتم تمنّون الموت من قبل ... ﴾

"And you had wished for death before..." (3:143)

(7) ﴿ ولا تتمنّوا ما فضل الله به بعضكم على بعض ... ﴾

"And do not covet what Allah favoured some of you with over the others..." (4:32)

(8 & 9) ﴿ ... فتمنّوا الموت إن كنتم صـدقين ... ﴾

"...Then wish for death if you are truthful..." (2:94 & 62:6)

(10) ﴿ و لا يتمنّونه, أبدا ... ﴾

"...But never do they desire it..." (62:7)

(11) ﴿ ولن يتمنّوه أبدا ... ﴾

"...But never will they wish for it..." (2:95)

(12) ﴿ وقالوا لن يدخل الجنّة إلا من كان هودا أو نصـٰرىٰ تلك أمانيّهم ... ﴾

"And they say: None shall enter paradise unless he be a Jew or a Christian. Those are their fancies..."(2:111)

(13) ﴿ ... وارتبتم وغرّتكم الأمانيّ ... ﴾

"...You doubted; and the fancies deceived you..." (57:14)

(14) ﴿ ومنهم أمّيّون لا يعلمون الكتـٰب إلا أمانيّ وإن هم إلّا يظنّون ﴾

"And among them are *'ummies* who do not know the book except whims; they do naught but conjecture."(2:78)

In all these instances the expressions *tamannâ, 'umniyyah*, etc. are used in the sense of wish, desire, whim, fancy, intention, etc. In none of these places would the meaning of reading or reciting fit in with the text. Some commentators of course think that in the last mentioned instance (no.14) the word *'amâniyya* may mean reading or reciting; but that assumption is not sustained by the *'ayah* itself; for its concluding clause: "and they do naught but conjecture" which immediately follows the expression, explains and elaborates it. In view of these uniform meanings of the expression everywhere in the Qur'ân it would be wrong to put the meaning of reading or reciting on the term *tamannâ* occurring in 22:52.

This is not to say that the same word may not be used in different senses at different places. What is peculiar in the present instance is that the expression under notice bears uniform senses in all the other places where it is used in the Qur'ân. And so far as its use in 22:52 is concerned, the same is its natural meaning. To put the sense of reading or reciting on the expression here would, as already indicated, be a gross affront to both history and theology; for it would then mean that there was no previous Prophet or Messenger of Allah who was not misled by Satan to utter in the name of Allah what He actually did not reveal. Neither does the history of previous Prophets bear such a highly generalized assertion, nor is it conceivable that Allah's revelations were sent down in such unprotected and vulnerable manners that Satan had in respect of every Prophet the chance of interfering with them. That interpretation would be in conflict with the very concept of revelation (*waḥy*) as enunciated in the Qur'ân which unequivocally states that Allah Himself protects His revelation from being interfered with directly or indirectly when it is being sent down. It is neither necessary nor justifiable to tarnish the records of all the previous Prophets and to undermine the very

nature of Allah's revelation simply to justify a manifestly untrue story and a supposed pitfall on the part of Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ). The plain implication of the *'ayâh* under discussion is what is an acknowledged fact of history. It is well known that in every age and place, whenever God's man, under his commission, planned to do good to mankind and embarked upon disseminating His message, Satan and his comrades intervened and attempted to obstruct, divert or frustrate the plan; but the truth and God's plan always prevailed. This universal fact of history and theology is only emphasized in the *'ayâh* under reference.[1]

That this is the natural and only meaning of the *'ayâh* is clear also from its context. The whole passage from *'âyah* 49 to 52 of the *sûrah* reads as follosws: "Say (O Prophet): O men, I am for you a clear warner. Hence those of you who believe and do good deeds, for them is forgiveness and a generous sustenance. But those who strive against Our signs to frustrate them, they will be companions of the fire. Never did We send a messenger or Prophet before you but that whenever he intended (to disseminate the message), Satan threw (his efforts) in his (the Prophet's or Messenger's) intention. But Allah obliterates what Satan exerts and then He makes His signs prevail. Verily Allah is All-knowing, All-Wise." The whole discussion here is on the Prophet's role as warner, the devil's role as opponent of the truth and the ultimate success of the truth. It is specially noteworthy that *'ayâh* 51, which immediately precedes the statement under discussion, declares the inevitable failure and perdition for the forces of evil; while the concluding part of *'ayâh* 52 emphasizes that Allah is All-Aware and All-Wise, i.e., He is so about the plans and efforts of Satan and his followers too. It would thus be

1. See 'Abû Ḥayyân (Muḥammad ibn Yûsuf) al-Andalusî, *Tafsîr al-Baḥr al-Muḥîṭ* Vol. VI, second impression, Dâr al-Fikr, Beirut,1398/1987, pp. 381-382. He writes as follows:

(لما ذكر تعالى أنه يدفع عن الذين آمنوا، وأنه تعالى أذن للمؤمنين في القتال، وأنهم كانوا أخرجوا من ديارهم، وذكر مسألة رسوله ﷺ بتكذيب من تقدم من الأمم لأنبيائهم، وما آل إليه أمرهم من الإهلاك إثر التكذيب وبعد الإمهال، وأمره أن ينادي الناس ويخبرهم أنه نذير لهم بعد أن استعجلوا بالعذاب، وأنه ليس له تقديم العذاب ولا تأخيره، ذكر له تعالى مسألة ثانية باعتبار من مضى من الرسل والأنبياء، وهو أنهم كانوا حريصين على إيمان قومهم، مطمئنين بذلك مثابرين عليه، وأنه ما منهم أحد إلا وكان الشيطان يراغمه بتزيين الكفر لقومه، وبث ذلك إليهم، وإلقائه في نفوسهم، كما أنه ﷺ كان من أحرص الناس على هدى قومه، وكان فيهم شياطين كالنضر بن الحرث يلقون لقومه وللوافدين عليه شبها يثبطون بها من الإسلام، ولذلك جاء قبل هذه الآية [والذين سعوا في آياتنا معاجزين] وسعيهم بإلقاء الشبه في قلوب من استمالوه، ونسب ذلك إلى الشيطان لأنه هو المغوي والمحرك شياطين الإنس للإغواء، كما قال [لأغوينهم]. وقيل: إن الشيطان هنا جنس يراد به شياطين الإنس، والضمير في أمنيته عائد على الشيطان أي في أمنيّة نفسه أي بسبب أمنية نفسه، ومفعول ألقى محذوف لفهم المعنى وهو الشر والكفر، ومخالفة ذلك الرسول أو النبيّ أن الشيطان ليس يلقي الخير. ومعنى [فينسخ الله ما يلقي الشيطان] أي يزيل تلك الشبه شيئا فشيئا حتى يسلم الناس كما قال تعالى: [ورأيت الناس يدخلون في دين الله أفواجا]. [ويحكم الله آياته] أي معجزاته يظهرها محكمة لادنس فيها ليجعل ما يلقي الشيطان من تلك الشبه وزخارف القول فتنة لمريض القلب ولقاسيه وليعلم من أوتي العلم أن ما تمنى الرسول والنبي من هداية قومه وإيمانهم هو الحق وهذه الآية ليس فيها إسناد شيء إلى الرسول ﷺ إنما تضمنت حالة من كان قبله من الرسل والأنبياء إذا تمنوا...)

quite contrary to the spirit and context of the passage as a whole to suggest that in spite of Allah's being All-Aware and All-Wise, Satan nevertheless succeeds in interfering with His revelations to His Prophets and Messengers! To interpret *tamannâ* in the passage as reading or reciting would be tantamount to such an absurd proposition.

Those who put the meaning of reading or recitation on the expression *tamannâ* do in fact approach the *'âyah* 22:52 either with a prejudice or with a preconception. Some assume that the story of the "satanic verses" is a fact without examining its merits and then, on the basis of this assumption, seek its support by putting the meaning of reading or recitation on the expression *tamannâ* in 22:52; and finally they cite this very *'âyah* as evidence of the genuineness of the story. This is clearly arguing in a circle and founding one hypothesis upon another. On the other hand there are some others who have their attention fixed primarily on the subject of *naskh* (abrogation or repeal) and approach the *'âyah* from that point of view. They bring in the story of the "satanic verses" not so much to examine its merits as really to illustrate the subject of *naskh;* and to relate the story to *'âyah* 22:52 they put the meaning of reading or recitation on *tamannâ* occurring in it, caring little to see the implications and consequences of such a forced interpretation of the expression. The technicalities of the subject of *naskh* need not be discussed here; but it would suffice to point out that it is not at all necessary to have recourse to the story of the "satanic verses" nor to twist the meaning of *tamannâ* in order to explain or illustrate the subject of *naskh*.

Last but not least, those who relate the two Qur'ânic passages, 17:73-75 and 22:52, to the story overlook the chronology of the events, particularly the dates of revelation of the two passages.[1] It is an established fact that the migration to Abyssinia took place in the month of Rajab of the fifth year of the mission and the temporary return of the emigrants took place in Shawwâl of that very year. If the story is to be connected with this latter event, then the incident narrated in the story must have taken place before the month of Shawwâl, i.e. in Ramaḍân of that year. Now *sûrat al-'Isrâ'* and *sûrat al-Ḥajj* in which respectively the two passages occur, were revealed long afterwards

1. This point has been raised by some classical scholars as well as by at least two modern scholars. See Muḥammad Ali, *Holy Qur'ân* (Translation and Commentary) first ed. 1917, footnote 1701, p.658; M. Akram Khân, *Mustafâ Charit* (Bengali text), 1st print 1936), reprinted Dhaka, 1975, pp. 389-390; Abû al-'A'lâ Maudûdî, *Sîrat-i-Sarwar-i-'Âlam,* II, Lahore, 1978., pp. 574-575.

— the first on the occasion of *'isrâ'* and *mi'râj* which, according to the most reliable accounts, took place in the 11th or 12th year of the mission; and *sûrat al-Ḥajj*, as its internal evidence shows, was revealed at Madina, most probably in the first year of *hijrah*. This would mean that the alleged disapproval of the Prophet's alleged act was made some five years after its commission; while the notice of repeal of the alleged interpolation and a sort of consolation for him were given still two years subsequently. No rational being could accept such an absurd explanation. Alternatively, if it is assumed that the passages in question were each revealed separately from the rest of the two *surahs* and not very long after the incident, then also there remain several questions to be answered: (a) Why were they not incorporated in *sûrat al-Najm* or any other *sûrah* or *sûrahs* that were revealed immediately afterwards and prior to the revelation of *sûrat al-'Isrâ'* and *sûrat al-Ḥajj*? (b) How were they kept separately for so long a time without being incorporated in any other *sûrah* or *sûrahs* and (c) what were the reasons and occasions for their incorporation in *sûrat al-'Isrâ'* and *sûrat al-Ḥajj*? The fact is that the story-tellers have forcibly and unnaturally attempted to fit these passages in the story and that the true meaning and purport of the passages do not bear out the story.

Thirdly, the internal evidence of *sûrat al-Najm*, in connection with the revelation of which the incident is said to have taken place, belies the story. It is noteworthy that the *sûrah* starts by emphasizing that the Prophet did not err or mistake and then states unequivocally in its *'âyah* 3-4: "He does not speak out of his desire. It is naught but *waḥy* (revelation) communicated (*yûḥâ*) to him." Now, it is simply unthinkable that after announcing at the very beginning of the *sûrah* that the Prophet has not gone astray, nor erred, nor does he speak out of his own wish and whim, but that what he gives out is only "revelation" communicated to him, he would immediately and in the process of receiving the same revelation set at naught this unequivocal declaration by introducing into it something extraneous and contradictory to it! Nothing could be a stronger proof of the baselessness of the allegation made in the story than these clear statements at the beginning of the *sûrah*.

Again, some versions of the story say that the alleged "satanic verses" were inserted after the 20th *'âyah* of the *sûrah* and that subsequently these were simply dropped. Other versions suggest, though not clearly state, that the "satanic verses" were replaced by the existing *'âyas* 21-23. All the versions agree in stating that the Prophet recited the whole *sûrah* on the occa-

sion and prostrated himself at the end of it. Indeed the last *'âyah* of the *sûrah* is a command to prostrate. Now, we may consider the *sûrah* in two ways, i.e., by simply inserting the alleged "satanic verses" after the 20th *'âyah* but keeping the existing *'âyahs* 21:23 in their place; or by replacing these latter with the "satanic verses". In either case there will remain incongruities and difficulties showing the absurdity of the story. Thus, if we simply insert the "satanic verses" without taking out the *'âyahs* 21-23, the passage will make an absurd and inconsistent statement and will read as follows: "Do you see Al-Lât and Al-'Uzzâ, and the other third, Manât? Those are swans exalted, whose intercession is to be expected. That then is a very unfair division. These are nothing but names that you have devised — you and your fathers — Allah has sent down no authority for it...." etc. The passage in this form would contain appreciation as well as strong denunciation of the goddesses at the same time and the inconsistency and absurdity would be conspicuous.

On the other hand, if the "satanic verses" are left as they are and the *'âyahs* 21-23 are taken out, then also there would remain an equally strong denunciation of the goddesses and of the principle of intercession in the *'âyahs* both preceding and following the "satanic verses". To begin with, *'âyahs* 20, "And Manât, the other third?" is clearly a derogatory expression, for the adjective, *al-'ukhrâ,* (the other) is used contemptuously and derisively.[1] It would then be simply incongruous to state, after that humiliating description of the goddess, that she is a highly placed and interceding deity. But leaving aside these *'âyahs,* if we proceed with the 24th *'âyah* onwards we come across a number of other and uncompromising denunciation of the unbelievers' notion of intercession. Thus, first, the very 24th *'âyah* denies the efficacy of intercession in the form of an interrogation: "Is it for man to have what he wishes (for him)?" ﴿أم للإنسان ما تمنّى﴾ i.e., it is a vain wish that intercession will be of any avail to him.[2] The *'âyah* is only an emphasis on what has been stated in the previous *'âyahs* about the inefficacy of the goddesses. Similarly *'âyah* 25 is a follow-on and reminder that "To Allah belongs the end as also the beginning (of every matter)", i.e, man should look to Him Alone in all affairs and should not expect any kind of help or assistance from any other deity or entity. The same theme is continued and elucidated in *'âyah* 26 which faslifies, on the one hand, the erroneous notion

1. See for instance Al-Bayḍâwî, *Tafsîr,* II, 440.
2. *Ibid.*

of the unbelievers that angels were Allah's daughters and that the above mentioned goddesses were some forms of representations of those angels.[1] On the other hand it stresses that even those angels have no power to intercede except by Allah's leave. Again, far from betraying an attitude of compromise, the unbelieving leaders' attitude is denounced in *'âyah* 29 and the Messenger of Allah is clearly instructed to shun and avoid them: "Therefore, shun those who turn away from Our revelation and desire for nothing but the life of this world" ﴿ فاعرض عن من تولّىٰ عن ذكرنا و لم يرد إلا الحيوٰة الدنيا ﴾ . The theme is continued in the succeeding *'âyahs* and *'âyah* 31 again emphasizes the principle of individual responsibility. Finally, in *'âyahs* 33-40 a very pointed allusion is made to the conduct of one of the unbelieving leaders, and many commentators take him to be Al-Walîd ibn al-Mughîrah,[2] saying: "Do you see the one who turns back and gives little and holds back" etc., and ends with once again disapproving the notion of intercession and emphasizing the principle of individual responsibility thus: "That no bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another; that man can have nothing but what he strives for; and that his acts will soon be looked into;" etc.[3]

Thus the whole text from *'âyahs* 19 to 42, indeed to the end of the *sûrah*, has a unity and continuity in both theme and sequence. There is no giving in on the question of the futility of intercession by anyone; no relaxation on the principle of individual and personal responsibility, no softening down of denunciation of the conduct of the unbelieving leaders and no accommotiveness shown to their idiosyncracies and attitudes. The interpolation of the "satanic verses" immediately after *'âyah* 20, and the elimination of the *'âyahs* 21-23 instead, though it will only disturb the sequence and be incongruous, will not destroy the force of the main theme. No reasonable person, after a careful perusal of the *sûrah* as a whole, can assume that any of the unbelieving Quraysh leaders, who were after all no idiots, would, after listening to the end of the *sûrah*, have an impression that the Prophet had accommodated their views and that therefore there remained no material point of disagreement between him and them. Whatever might have been the source and purpose of the story, the internal evidence of the *sûrah* simply refuses to accept it. Any careful reader of the *sûrah* can see that the story has

1. *Ibid.*
2. *Ibid.*, 442.
3. Q. 53:33-40.

been unnaturally grafted on it.

III. THE REPORTS FAIL THE TESTS OF GENUINENESS

The threefold Qur'ânic evidence against the story is decisive. Apart from that, however, a little careful examination of the reports would at once expose the speciousness of the story. The story has come down in about a dozen varying versions, each version having again a couple or more of different chains of narrators (*isnâd*). These *isnâds* have been critically examined by a number of both classical and modern experts[1] and all agree in holding that each version is technically *mursal*, i.e., its *isnâd* does not go up beyond the second generation (*tâbi'ûn*) after the Prophet. Only one of these versions coming through Sa'îd ibn Jubayr is traced back to 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abbas.[2] But, as Qâḍî 'Ayâḍ points put, the main narrator in this version, Shu'ba, explicity points out that he only supposes that the report comes from Ibn 'Abbâs.[3] It may be added in this connection that even Ibn 'Abbâs could not have been an eye-witness to the alleged incident; for he was born only three years before the *hijrah*, i.e., some five years after the alleged incident. Another narrator in this version is Ibn al-Kalbî who is acknowledgedly an unreliable reporter. Similarly in another form one of the narrators is Al-Muṭṭalib ibn 'Abd Allâh who is equally unreliable.[4] Even Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalânî, who is otherwise inclined to attach some importance to the fact of the report's having been transmitted through a number of channels, appears to regard this version too as *mursal*.[5] Thus the story came into existence and got currency during the time of the second generation after the Prophet. None of the reporters is contemporary with him, not to speak of being an eye-witness of the incident. If anyone of them had heard it from any of the Companions, there is no reason why he should not have mentioned it. Apart from the report being *mursal*, all the versions suffer from having in their *isnâds* persons who are considered weak *(ḍa'îf)*, or unreliable (not *thiqah*) or unknown (*majhûl*). There are also breaks in the chains of narrators of several

1. A good survey of the *isnâds* of all the versions is Nâsir al-Dîn al-Albânî, *Naṣb al-Majanîq li Nasf Qiṣṣat al-Gharânîq*, Damascus, 1952, pp. 4-18. A more recent treatment is 'Alî ibn Ḥasan ibn 'Alî ibn 'Abd al-Ḥamîd, *Dalâ'il al-Taḥqîq li'ibṭâl qiṣṣat al-Gharânîq*, Jeddah, 1412/1992.

2. See Al-Ṭabarî, *Tafsîr*, 17/120.

3. Qâḍî 'Ayâḍ, *Al-Shifâ'*, II, 118. Also cited in Al-Albânî, *op.cit.*, pp. 5-6.

4. Al Dhahabî, *Mîzân etc.*, II, 482.

5. See Al-Albânî, *op.cit.*, 5-6.

of the versions.[1]

As regards the text of the report, each version differs from the other in essential and material respects. Leaving aside differences in matters of detail, there are grave differences and disagreements in all the four essential respects, namely, (a) the occasion of the incident, (b) nature of the Prohet's alleged act, (c) the wording of the alleged "satanic verses" and (d) their effect or sequel.

Thus, with regard to the occasion of the incident, some versions of the report say that the Prophet was praying at the Ka'ba along with a number of his companions and in the presence of many unbelievers and their leaders and the *sûrat al-Najm* was revealed in the course of prayer. Other versions say that he was talking to the unbelievers gathered at the Ka'ba compound when the *sûrah* was revealed; while some other versions say that the *sûrah* had already been revealed and that the unbelieving leaders, having heard that there was the mention of their goddesses in the *sûrah*, grew inquisitive about it and came to the Prophet to hear it. He then recited it before them and in the course of it uttered the "satanic verses". Still other versions say that the unbelieving leaders, seeing that the Prophet was always surrounded by poor and unimportant converts, told him that if he made some concessions regarding the goddesses, the leaders of the community would sit with him and that thereby the visitors from outside who used to come to him to enquire about his mission would be impressed and would take him seriously. Therefore the Prophet recited the *sûrah* to the unbelieving leaders and uttered the "satanic verses" after its 19th *'âyah.*

As regards the nature of the alleged uttering of the "satanic verses", some versions of the report say that Satan threw the alleged verses in the course of the revelation of the *sûrah* and the Prophet took them to have been brought by Jibrîl. Other versions say that the Prophet uttered them in consequence of his wish to have some such revelation delivered to him as would soften the unbelieving leaders' attitude towards him; while other versions would have us believe that he uttered them by mistake. Still other versions say that he uttered them intentionally but with notes of interrogation signifying denial. Again, there are some versions which simply say that the Prophet uttered them , without giving any reason or mentioning the influence of Satan. More

5. *Ibid.*, 6-18 concludes thus:

(تلك هي روايات القصة ، وهي كلها كما رأيت معلة بالإرسال والضعف والجهالة ، فليس فيها ما يصلح للاحتجاج به .)

significantly, some other versions say that it was not the Prophet, but Satan himself who, imitating the latter's voice, uttered the verses and the audience mistook them to have been recited by the Prophet. Yet other versions state that it was neither the Prophet, nor Satan, but someone from among the unbelievers who uttered the alleged verses when the Prophet had just completed the recitation of *'âyah* 19 of the *sûrah.*

More importantly, the wording of the allegedly interpolated verses differs in each version from that in the other. As Maudûdî points out,[1] an analysis of the various versions yields as many as 15 different texts with notable differences in the wordings.

Finally, with regard to the immediate effect of or reaction to the alleged utterance of the verses, most of the versions say that the unbelievers were pleased and prostrated themselves along with the Prophet at the end of his recitation of the *sûrah;* but some mention Al-Walîd ibn al-Mughîrah's or 'Abû Uḥayḥah's not having gone into prostration but having only raised a handful of dust (or stones) and touched them with his forehead. Other versions, however, do not refer at all to this otherwise noticeable performance on the part of those leaders. Significantly, as regards the Muslims' reaction, some versions say that they, in consonance with their habit of following the Prophet, all prostrated themselves along with him. Still other reports say, more significantly, that while the unbelievers heard the alleged "satanic verses", the believers did not at all hear them. Again, all the versions unanimously show that no objection or uneasiness was expressed by any of the believers at the Prophet's alleged utterance of the verses, nor to his alleged dropping of them subsequently.

This negative aspect of the internal evidence of the reports deserves further emphasis. For, if such an unusual incident as the giving out of some compromising verses and their subsequent withdrawal had at all taken place, it would have been narrated by some of the Prophet's many companions. And judging from the account of the subsequent incidents of *'isrâ'* and *mi'râj,* which occasioned serious misgivings in some of the believers, it is unlikely that an incident like that of interpolation and subsequent withdrawal of the alleged "satanic verses" would have passed off without any voice of protest or uneasiness having been expressed by any of the Muslims.

To sum up, the differences and divergences in the reports about the occa-

1. Maudûdî, *op.cit.,* II, 572.

sion of the incident, the nature of the Prophet's alleged act, the wording of the alleged verses and their sequel and effect are only illustrative of the fact that none of them is a correct report of what actually transpired. These differences also show that the narrators have added their own notions and imagination to the story in the course of its transmission. The report is not given, it may once again be emphasized, by any eye-witness of the alleged incident, nor by any companion of the Prophet. It originated with the second generation (*tâbi'ûn*) after the Prophet. Besides this *mursal* nature of the reports, their *isnâd* or chains of narrators are not at all unimpeachable. On the other hand, in most cases, the *isnâd* is positively "weak" or "unreliable" or "disconnected". The fact of the multiplicity of channels (*ṭuruq*) which is sometimes considered a strengthening factor, has also been examined by experts in this connection; and it has been held that this strengthening factor does not apply in the present instance in view of the inherent weaknesses of the *isnâds* of the various channels.[1] All these factors mark the story out to be only a later fabrication. This is in addition to its glaring conflicts with the Qur'ânic evidence which, as pointed out above, is alone sufficient to discredit the story.

IV. THE ORIGIN AND CURRENCY OF THE STORY EXPLAINED

The discrepancies and differences in the various versions of the story suggest that it has been made up by the use of a good deal of imagination and fiction round a core of facts. The last *'âyah* of *sûrat al-Najm* is a command to prostate for Allah; and it is a fact that the Prophet, when he recited the *sûrah* up to its end, prostrated himself and those with him also did so. This is attested by two eyewitnesss, 'Abd Allah ibn Mas'ûd and 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib ibn 'Abî Wadâ'ah. The former states that *sûrat al-Najm* was the first *sûrah* which the Prophet recited in front of a gathering of believers and unbelievers at the Ka'ba compound and that when he finished it and went into prostration all present, believers and unbelievers, also prostrated themselves. Ibn Mas'ûd further says that he noticed 'Umayyah ibn Khalaf's not going into prostration but raising a handful of dust up to his forehead.[2] Ibn Mas'ûd's information is confirmed by 'Ikrimah who, though not an eye-witness, narrates the same story through Ibn 'Abbâs.[3] The other eye-witness,

1. Al-Albânî, *op.cit.*, 6-9.
2. *Ṣaḥîḥ ibn Khuzaymah* (ed. M. A'ẓamî), no. 553, p. 278.
3. *Bukhârî*, nos. 1071, 4826.

'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, gives a similar account and adds that he himself did not join the others in prostrating. He was not a Muslim at the time and says that he made amends for that omission of his by having subsequently never failed to prostrate himself whenever he recited the *sûrah*.

What is specially noteworthy in these reports is that they do not make the slightest allusion to the Prophet's having ever been eager for making a compromise with the unbelievers nor to his having allegedly interpolated the "satanic verses" in the course of his recitation of the *sûrah*. They do, however, speak of the prostration of the unbelievers on the occasion. This raises the question: Why should they have prostrated themselves if no compromise was made with them?

To explain the unbelievers' action it is not absolutely necessary, however, to assume that the Prophet made a compromise with them. The explanation lies in the circumstances of the time. It is an acknowledged fact that the Prophet and the Muslims could not publicly and in a body perform prayer or recite the Qur'ân at the Ka'ba before 'Umar's (r.a.) conversion, which took place, according to most of the accounts, after the migration of the first batch of Muslims to Abyssinia. Some of the reports of course indicate that his conversion took place in the sixth year of the mission; but in view of the statements in other reports suggesting an earlier date and also in view of the fact that the temporary return of the emigrants in Shawwal of the 5th year took place as a sequel to the incident of the unbelievers' prostration and the rumour arising out of it, we may safely assume that 'Umar's conversion took place shortly after the migration to Abyssinia, most probably in the month of Sha'ban or Ramaḍân of that year. His conversion was a great gain to Islam. Conversely it occasioned a corresponding disappointment among the unbelieving leaders, the more so as it came in the wake of a group of their kinsmen's having left them and migrated to a foreign country. The Quraysh leaders must have also apprehended that the migration of the Muslims to Abyssinia would have an adverse effect on their (the Quraysh leaders') trade with that country. All these circumistances made them eager for making a compromise with the Prophet and for creating such a situation as would induce the emigrants to return to Makka. It is noteworthy that both the Qur'anic evidence and the reports show that it was the Quraysh leaders and not the Prophet, who were eager for making a compromise and took the ini-

tiatives in this regard. It was at such a stage of the Quraysh leaders' mentality that the Prophet and the Muslims, encouraged by 'Umar's conversion, went to the Ka'ba compound and there recited *sûrat al-Najm* either in the course of prayer or independently of it.

A second fact which needs emphasizing in this connection is that the text of the so-called "satanic verses" was no new composition made on the occasion mentioned. It was an old couplet which the Quraysh pagans used to recite in praise of their goddesses while circumambulating the Ka'ba.[1] It is also to be remembered that the unbelievers used to create noise and disturbances whenever the Prophet or the Muslims recited the Qur'ân publicly. Therefore it is very likely that when the Prophet recited the *sûrah* and mentioned Al-Lât and Al-'Uzzâ in the course of his recitation and in a denunciatory strain, some of the Quraysh unbelievers instantly interrupted and protested by shouting out the couplet. Significantly enough, some versions of the story clearly state that the "satanic verses" were uttered not by the Prophet but by satan or some unbelievers at the time of the Prophet's recitation of the *sûrah*. Even the version said to have been transmitted by 'Urwah ibn al-Zubayr says first that it was "thrown in" by satan without mentioning "on the tongue of the Prophet", and later on specifically stating that "the Muslims did not hear what satan threw in on the tongues of the polytheists"(لم يكن المسلمون سمعوا الذي ألقى الشيطان على ألسنة المشركين)[2]. The same information is given in the version comimg through Ibn Shihâb al-Zuhrî wherein it is stated: "The Muslims did not hear what the devil threw in the hearing of the unbelievers"(لم يكن المسلمون سمعوا الذي ألقى الشيطان في مسامع المشركين).[3] Rightly, therefore, Ibn Taymiyyah categorically states that the alleged couplet was put by satan into the hearing of the unbelievers.[4]

The prostration by the unbelievers was thus a gesture of protest and an attempt to confuse the audience by prostrating themselves in the name of the goddesses. The act might also have been due to that stunning effect of the recitation of the Qur'ân of which we get a glimpse in the well-known incident of 'Utbah ibn Rabî'ah's having once been so moved on hearing the

1. Ibn al-Kalbî, *Kitâb al-Aṣnâm*, ed. Aḥmad Zakî Pâshâ, p. 19; Yâqût, *Mu'jam al-Buldân*, IV, 116.

2. Al-Ṭabarani, *Majma' etc.*, VI, 32-34; VIII, 70-72, Also quoted in Al-Albânî, *op.cit.*, 12-13.

3. Ibn Kathîr, *Tafsîr*.

4. Ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmû'at Fatâwâ*, II, 282.

Prophet's recitation of the Qur'ân that the other Quraysh leaders supposed that his "spell" had worked on 'Utbah.[1] It was indeed the same bewitching effect of the Qur'ân for which the Quraysh leaders constantly dubbed the Prophet as a spell-monger (*sâḥir*) and the Qur'ân as magic (*siḥr*). It was for the same reason that they stipulated with Ibn al-Dughunnah that 'Abû Bakr could stay in Makka only if he performed his prayers at home and refrained from attracting their children and womenfolk by publicly and loudly reciting the Qur'ân.[2]

In any case, since the Quraysh leaders prostrated themseves or made a show of prostration they must have been pressed by their followers to explain the act. And the only explanation which, under the circumistances, could have suggested itself to them was to say that they did so because they heard Muḥammad (ﷺ) utter those felicitating words for the goddesses. They also used the occasion to bruit abroad a rumour, particularly in Abyssinia, to the effect that a compromise had been made between them and the Prophet, and thus to induce the emigrants to return to Makka. Surely the rumour had been spread surreptitiously, or, as both 'Urwah ibn al-Zubayr's and Ibn Shihâb's versions say: "It was given currency by Satan till it reached Abyssinia" (وأظهرها الشيطان حتى بلغت الحبشة / أرض الحبشة). If the Prophet had at all mistakenly himself uttered the couplet and then realized it and retracted, as the story says, or if he had an inkling of the Quraysh leaders' manoeuvre, he would surely have managed to send a word of warning about it to the emigrants in Abyssinia.

Thus the Prophet's recitation of *sûrat al-Najm* at the Ka'ba, the prostration by the Muslims and unbelievers present there and the return of a number of emigrants on the basis of a rumour of compromise are facts. The statements that the Prophet had made a compromise with the unbelievers and had uttered the couplet are rumours spread by the unbelieving leaders. In subsequent ages, particularly during the time of the second generation after the Prophet, the facts and the baseless rumours were mixed up and the story assumed the form or forms in which we find it recorded and transmitted by some narrators and commentators.

That a number of chroniclers and commentators thought it fit to notice and transmit the story was due partly to that tendency which endeavoured to

1. *Supra*, pp. 648-649.
2. Ibn Hishâm, I, p. 373.

record and transmit all that was available of facts and fiction relating to the Prophet's life and activities, leaving it for the discerning readers to draw their own conclusions. Mainly, however, those of the commentators and scholars who have recorded the story appear to have done so with a view to finding "proofs" and illustration for the theme of *naskh* (abrogation , repeal , replacement?).[1] That is why they bring in the story not in connection with their explanation of *sûrat al-Najm* but in connection with that of 22:52 (*sûrat al-Ḥajj*). For the same purpose some of them relate the story to 17:73 (*sûrat al-'Isrâ'*). Whatever the merits of their expositions concerning the subject of *naskh*, it is obvious, as mentioned earlier, that their relating the story to these *'âyahs* is anachronistic and the clear meaning and purport of these passages positively contradict the story of compromise by the Prophet and his alleged utterance of the "satanic verses".

1. This point has been made very effectively by J. Burton in "Those are the High-Flying Cranes", *Journal of Semitic Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 2, 1970, pp. 246-265. Burton's main conclusion is that the reports about the story of the "stanic verses" are later fabrications.

CHAPTER XXX

THE CLIMAX OF OPPOSITION AND CALAMITY

I. THE BOYCOTT AND BLOCKADE OF BANÛ HÂSHIM

The failure of the Quraysh leaders to obtain extradition of the emigrants, the latter's getting a rather safe haven in Abyssinia and the unmistakbly friendly attittude of the Abyssinian ruler towards them cut the Quraysh leaders to the quick. Their anger and exasperation were further heightened by the slow but steady progress of Islam in Makka itself, particularly by the conversion of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭâb (r.a.) about that time and the spread of the news of Islam among the Arabian tribes in general.[1] Hence the Makkan leaders now became all the more intent upon adopting the crude but historically always unsuccessful expedient of attempting to kill a faith by putting an end to the life of its propagator.[2] Yet, in spite of the coalition of all the clans on the issue of opposing Islam and the Prophet, they were clearly not in a position to come to an armed conflict with Banû Hâshim (with Banû al-Muṭṭalib) whose determination to defend the Prophet against all odds was as solid as ever. As an alternative course the Quraysh leaders decided to coerce Banû Hâshim to withdraw their protection for the Prophet by means of what modern international law calls a 'forceful method short of war', namely, boycott and blockade of Banû Hâshim. They drew up a charter of boycott undertaking to cut off all kinds of social contact and relationship with Banû Hâshim and Banû Al-Muṭṭalib including ban on intermarriage and participation in any kind of social and community activities. They also undertook to stop business and commercial transactions with them — neither to sell anything to them nor to buy from them. The leaders of all the clans affixed their consent and signature to the document and in order to impart to it a binding force and solemnity they made their goddesses witnesses to it and hung up the charter inside the Ka'ba.[3] Not only that; they also took steps to get the adhesion of the outside tribes to the policy of boycott. Particularly the Quraysh leaders entered into a pact to this effect with

1. Ibn Hisham, I, 350.
2. Ibn Sa'd, I, 208.
3. *Ibid.*, 208-209; Ibn Hishâm, I, 350; Al-Ṭabarî, *Târîkh*, II, 335-336. Ibn Isḥâq says that the writer of the charter was Manṣûr ibn 'Ikrama ibn Hâshim of Banû 'Abd al-Dâr and that subsequently his hand was paralyzed (Ibn Hishâm, I, 350, 377; Ibn Sa'd, I, 209). Ibn Hishâm says, however, that the writer was Al-Naḍr ibn al-Ḥârith.

the powerful tribe of Banû Kinânah.[1] Thus the boycott had two distinct aspects, social excommunication and economic blockade. It was put in force at the beginning of the 7th year of the mission.[2]

In their turn Banû Hâshim (with Banû al-Muṭṭalib) rose equal to the occasion and took up the challenge defiantly and heroically. They also adopted a policy of counter-non-cooperation against all the other clans as long as they would not mend their ways. On the advice of their leader 'Abû Ṭâlib all the members of Banû Hâshim and Banû Al-Muṭṭalib withdrew from the different quarters of the town and started living together and unitedly in the naturally defenseve valley of 'Abû-Ṭâlib (Shi'b 'Abû Ṭâlib).[3] The strategy adopted by them seems to have been suggested also by a consideration for the safety of the Prophet; for though the Quraysh clans did not dare engage openly in an armed conflict with Banû Hâshim, it was as clear to them as to the Quraysh leaders that the sole purpose of the boycott was to get the Prophet surrendered to them for their killing him. There was thus a real threat to his otherwise being stealthily assassinated at their instance.

The defensive position taken by Banû Hâshim, however, placed them in the position of a beleagured community and rendered the enforcement of the economic blockade comparatively easier for the Quraysh leaders. In any case, the boycott and blocake was an extraordinary and significant development in Arabian tribal history as well as in the history of the town of Makka. The fissure in the façade of the Makkan Quraysh's tribal solidarity and the division of the city into two hostile camps over the Prophet and his message were now clear to all the Arab tribes. It was also clear, interestingly enough, that the Quraysh leaders, though they championed the cause of the ancient religion, were the ones who flouted the ancient and age-old custom of protecting clansmen and taking care of blood relations. Conversely the conduct of the members of Banû Hâshim, though they supported the Prophet, was in strict conformity with the traditional values and ancient customs of protecting one's clan-member and blood-relation; for they kept the issue of the faith distinct from their act and did not abandon the ancient faith while supporting the Prophet. It was only 'Abû Lahab who went against this general policy of his clan and sided openly with the Prophet's enemies.

1. *Bukhârî*, no. 1590; *Musnad*, II, 237.
2. Ibn Sa'd, I, 209.
3. Situated in the Abû Qubays mountain, not far from the Ka'ba.

The boycott and blockade lasted for more than two years.[1] During this period the blockaded people suffered immense hardships, particularly for want of water and food supplies; for the Quraysh leaders took special care to see that no food suppplies and other necessaries of life reached Banû Hâshim. According to the statements of some of the sufferers themselves, they had to starve for days together and for want of food they sometimes lived on tree-leaves.[2] Another companion of the Prophet states that he once boiled a piece of dry skin of an animal and ate it to keep himself alive.[3] The cries of starving children could be heard from outside the valley.[4] But in spite of such hardships the people of Banû Hâshim and Banû Al-Muṭṭalib remained unshaken in their determination to protect the Prophet and remained entrenched in their defensive position.

Several factors worked, however, against the Quraysh leaders and threatened the collapse not only of the boycott but their coalition itself. In the first place, the cruelty of the Quraysh overshot itself. The sufferings of Banû Hâshim who had done no wrong towards the coalition clans and who, in the eyes even of their adversaries, were performing only the time-honoured and legitimate duty of supporting and protecting their clansmen, inspired respect and sympathy in the minds of many who gardually became lukewarm in their support for the boycott, particularly as the heart-rending cries of the starving children could be heard from outside the valley. Secondly, in spite of their blind hostility towards the Prophet the Quraysh clans could not throw to the winds the age-old institution of the holy months, particularly the month of Dhû al-Ḥijjah, during which they had to stop hostilities against one another. They would probably have violated this institution too if it concerned the Makkan Quraysh alone; but it was an institution universally respected by all the Arab tribes. So the Quraysh could not just ignore it; nor could they prevail upon all the Arab tribes to do so. The upshot was that during the holy months Banû Hâshim and Banû Al-Muṭṭalib could come out of their mountain retreat and even the Prophet visited the tribes coming on pilgrimage to Makka and Minâ and preached to them.[5] Doubtless the mem-

1. Ibn Isḥâq says that it lasted for two or three years; while Mûsâ ibn 'Uqbah and Ibn Sa'd categorically state that it lasted for three years.

2. Suhayli, II, 127.

3. *Ibid.*

4. Ibn Sa'd, I, 209.

5. Ibn Sa'd, I, 209; *Bukhârî*, no. 1590; *Musnad*, II, 237.

bers of the two clans took advantage of the sacred season to gather as much provision as possible for the rest of the year.

Thirdly, there were strong ties of blood and marriage relationship between Banû Hâshim and many of the coalition clans including Banû Makhzûm, who were at the forefront in opposing the Prophet. As time went on, the conscience of many such blood relations of Banû Hâshim was pricked by their conduct, particularly by their violation of another of the time-honoured customs, that of supporting and helping one's blood-relations (*ṣilat al-raḥim*). Such relatives now saw that far from attending to this traditional duty they were doing just its opposite, namely, causing the ruin of their close relatives. Hence, although they had consented to the boycott resolution on the spur of the moment, many of them in their heart of hearts turned against it almost from the beginning. Some of them even took to smuggling food-stuffs and other provisions to their beleagured relatives in the valley of 'Abû Ṭâlib. It is on record that Ḥakîm ibn Ḥizâm of Banû Asad, a nephew (brother's son) of Khadîjah's (r.a.) and Hishâm ibn 'Amr of Banû 'Âmir, another of her close relatives, used to send food supplies to their relatives in the valley. Once, while Ḥakîm was thus taking a load of corn there he was seen by 'Abû Jahl who questioned him about the corn and, on his telling him that he was taking it to her aunt in the valley, he opposed it. An altercation ensued in the course of which 'Abû Al-Bakhtarî ibn Hishâm, also of Banû Asad, arrived there. He supported Ḥakîm and was in turn rebuked by 'Abû Jahl. The quarrel grew hotter and developed into a fracas in the course of which 'Abû Al-Bakhtarî struck 'Abû Jahl with a piece of bone and wounded him. Abû Jahl swallowed the humiliation in silence because, we are told by Ibn Isḥâq, the incident was being watched by Ḥamzah ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib and 'Abû Jahl, realizing it, adopted a low profile because he did not like the incident to have been reported to the Prophet.[1] A more substantial reason was perhaps that 'Abû Jahl apprehended that if he proceeded further with the matter it might lead to an open breach in the coalition. Another report shows that Hishâm ibn 'Amr's method of supplying food to the valley was more ingenious. He used to load a camel with provisions and then allow the animal to stray into the valley where the people of Banû Hashim used to take the load off and drive the animal out of the valley. Hishâm was similarly detected and caught in the process of his

1. Ibn Hishâm, I, 354.

act by some Quraysh leaders who threatened to punish him; but, interestingly enough, the report says that 'Abû Sufyân pleaded for condoning Hishâm's act because, after all, he was attending to the duty of *ṣilat al-raḥim*.[1] The incident is illustrative of how the severity of the Quraysh backfired and how important persons of their own group viewed the boycott as not quite a just procedure which contravened the recognized and time-honoured duty of *ṣilat al-raḥim*.

A fourth factor against the Quraysh leaders was that, though they enforced the trade embargo against Banû Hâshim in so far as the Makkan traders were concerned, they could not just force all the outside tribes and traders who came to Makka on business purposes to conform to the boycott. The strategy the Quraysh leaders appear to have adopted under the circumstances was to induce those foreign traders to sell their commodities only to the Quraysh leaders by offering an inflated price or by overbidding any prospective buyer from among Banû Hâshim. Obviously, no system of commercial boycott could be effectively maintained by means of such a self-destructive method nor could the Quraysh leaders themselves bear with it for long.

When therefore the boycott ran for about three years the inevitable reaction and opposition to it set in. Significantly enough, in this phase too it was the same Hishâm ibn 'Amr of Banû 'Âmir who is found taking the intiative in organizing the opposition to the boycott.[2] He first approached Zuhayr ibn 'Abî 'Umayyah, a leader of Banû Makhzûm and son of 'Abû Ṭâlib's sister 'Atîkah bint 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, telling him that it did not behove him to live happily and enjoy all the amenities of life while he himself was being a party to the destruction of his maternal relatives. Zuhayr replied in effect that he was helpless in the matter and that if there was someone to support him he would not suffer the inhuman boycott to continue for a single day. Hishâm said that he was there to work for the cause. Zuhayr asked him to seek for the support of some more persons. Being thus encouraged by Zuhayr's attitude and word, Hishâm contacted one by one Muṭ'im ibn 'Adiyy of Banû Nawfal, 'Abû al-Bakhtarî al-'Âṣ ibn Hâshim and Zam'ah ibn al-Aswad ibn al-Muṭṭalib, both of Banû Asad, and convinced them of the need for putting an end to the boycott. These five persons then met together one night to

1. *Ibid.*, 375.

2. Ibn Hishâm, I, 374-375; Al-Ṭabarî, *Târîkh*, II, 341 (I/1196).

finalize their plan of work.[1] On the following morning they went to the Ka'ba compound where the Quraysh leaders were assembled and took positions in different places in the assembly. According to plan, Zuhayr ibn 'Abî 'Umayyah, the Makhzûmite leader, first circumambulated the Ka'ba seven times and then addressed the Quraysh leaders saying that it was not proper for them to force one of their own clans and relatives to destruction for no offence of theirs. He stated that he would not stop unless the unjust boycott was abandoned and its charter cancelled. He was immediately opposed by 'Abû Jahl who pointed out that the charter of boycott had been agreed upon by all the clans and that it could by no means be set at naught. No sooner had 'Abû Jahl finished his word than Zam'ah contradicted him from another part of the assembly, strongly supporting Zuhayr and saying that he (Zam'ah) had not been in favour of the boycott even when the unjust charter was drawn up. Simultaneously 'Abû Al-Bakhtarî rose from another part of the assembly and demanded the cancellation of the charter of boycott; and before he finished Muṭ'im ibn 'Adiyy joined the discussion and stated, in the name of Allah, that he would have nothing to do with the boycott and its charter. Finding that the support for ending the boycott was widening 'Abû Jahl remarked that this was a move which those leaders had secretly contrived to make.[2]

The end of the boycott had a touch of miracle. It is reported that in the meantime the Prophet had been informed by Allah that the unjust provisions of the charter of boycott had been eaten up and effaced by worms. He informed his uncle 'Abû Ṭâlib about it and asked him to go to the Quraysh leaders to tell them about it and to ask them therefore to cease their hostility to Banû Hâshim. Accordingly 'Abû Ṭâlib, who was sure that his nephew did never utter an untruth, took some of his men with him and went to the Quraysh leaders. It appears that he and his companions arrived at the Ka'ba just at the moment when the Quraysh leaders were engaged in the above mentioned discussions about the fate of the charter of boycott. 'Abû Ṭâlib's arrival at the spot naturally attracted the attention of the entire assemblage who rightly guessed that he had come to tell them something very urgent and important. 'Abû Ṭâlib told them what the Prophet had informed him, asking the Quraysh leaders to bring out the charter and to see it, adding that if what the Prophet had said was found to be true, they should withdraw

1. Ibn Hishâm, I, 376; Al-Ṭabarî, *Târîkh*, II, 342 (I/1197).
2. *Ibid.*

their boycott and refrain from doing harm to their relatives; but if it was found to be otherwise he would withdraw his protection from the Prophet whom they could then either kill or keep alive as they liked.[1] Thereupon the Quraysh leaders brought out the charter and found to their utter surprise and dismay that what the Prophet had informed 'Abû Ṭâlib was true. Their discomfiture was complete and the opinion of the assemblage swang in favour of an immediate end of the boycott. Muṭ'im ibn 'Adiyy and his compatriots then went with their followers to the valley of 'Abû Ṭâlib and asked the clan of Banû Hâshim and Al-Muṭṭalib to come out of it and live in their respective homes. According to all the authorities the boycott thus came to an end early in the tenth year of the mission.

II. THE MIRACLE OF THE SPLITTING OF THE MOON

The miraculous destruction of the charter of boycott was preceded by a greater miracle, that of the splitting of the moon. It has been pointed out above that in spite of the boycott and blockade Banû Hâshim and the Prophet could and did come out of their valley during the sacred months. It was in the second year of the boycott when this important event took place. The Prophet was at Minâ with his companions. It was the night of the full moon. Shortly after sun-set the Prophet noticed that the full moon suddenly split up into two equal parts and appeared apart on the eastern horizon on two sides of a hill in front of them. He asked his companions to look and be witnesses of the event. They did so. It lasted for a twinkling of an eye. So did many of the unbelievers present at Minâ witness the unusual and miraculous sight.[2]

According to most of the commentators this event is referred to in Q. 54:2 which runs as follows:

﴿ اقتربت الساعة وانشقّ القمر * وإن يروا ءاية يعرضوا ويقولوا سحر مستمرّ ﴾

"The Hour (of judgement) has drawn near and the moon is cleft asunder; but even though they see a "sign", they turn away and say: this is transient magic." (54:1-2)

The past tense in the verb *inshaqqa* (انشق) used in relation to the moon in the first *'âyah* of the above passage clearly means that the event of which it speaks had actually taken place. There are, however, a number of passages in the Qur'ân wherein future events are prophesied by using past tenses.

1. Ibn Hishâm, I, 377; Ibn Sa'd, I, 209-210.

2. See *Bukhârî*, nos. 3868-3871; 4864-4868; *Muslim;* nos. 2800-2803; *Musnad*, I, 377, 413; IV, 81-82.

This is specially so wherein a serious disruption in the solar system at the approach of the Day of Judgement is prophesied.[1] On that basis one might be inclined to think that the passage 54:1-2 is prophetic in nature and speaks of an event yet to take place. But the passage under reference is distinguished from those other passages in at least three main respects. In the first place, in those passages more than one object are mentioned, such as the sun and the moon, or the skies, the stars, the sun and the moon, or the sun, the earth, the mountains, etc. In the present instance, however, the moon is singled out for special mention. Secondly, the verbs used in those passages are almost invariably preceded by the expression *'idhâ* (إذا), indicating unmistakably that they bear a future sense. Thirdly, in the passage under discussion its second *'âyah* speaks of the remark of the unbelievers at the sight of the "sign", which clearly shows that the event spoken of had taken place and that the unbelievers, even though they observed it, treated it as a transient 'magic'.

In fact a number of the companions of the Prophet, such as 'Abd Allah ibn Mas'ûd, Ḥudhayfah ibn al-Yamân and Jubayr ibn Muṭ'im (r.a.), were eye-witnesses to the event and they categorically attest it. Other companions like 'Anas ibn Mâlik and 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abbâs (r.a.), though they had not witnessed the event, attest it with equal emphasis. They must have received the account from their contemporaries who had witnessed the event. It is further clear from the reports that a number of the unbelievers present at Minâ at the time also saw the sight, but they remarked that it was a magic performed on them by the Prophet.[2] Some of them, differing from their compatriots, remarked that even if the Prophet could have performed a magic on those who had been present there at Minâ, he could not have done so on those who were not present there. And it so happened that some persons arrived there from outside Minâ and similarly stated that they had seen the unusual sight.[3] The second *'âyah* of the passage under discussion obviously refers to such remarks of the unbelievers of the occurrence.

The report given by 'Anas ibn Mâlik (r.a.) says that the event was a miracle performed in response to the unbelievers' demand for a "proof" of the

1. See for instance Q. 75:7-9; 81:1-6; 82:1-3 and 84:1-4.
2. See for instance *Musnad*, IV, 81-82.
3. *Ibid.* See also Ibn Kathîr, *Tafsîr*, VII, 447-450 and Al-Ṭabarî, *Tafsîr*, 27/50-52 where almost all the reports on the subject are given.

truth of the Prophet's claim to prophethood.[1] But from the reports of the eye-witnesses it does not appear to have been performed by the Prophet in response to the demand of the unbelievers. Also the Qur'anic passage quoted above specifically mentions it as a sign of Allah's power and of the inevitability and nearness in point of time of the Day of Judgement. The circumstantial evidence also points out that it was not performed on the demand of the unbelievers. As mentioned above, it occurred at the end of the second year of the boycott when the Quraysh leaders had obviously abandoned the policy of argumentation and had resolved upon either ruining Banû Hâshim or procuring the person of the Prophet for killing him. It was therefore no time for them to demand a proof of his prophetood, nor for him to ask Allah to provide him with a miracle in order to satisfy the unbelievers.

Skeptics might say that it is inconceivable and against the law of nature that such a large celestial object as the moon should split itself into two parts, each part moving thousands of miles away from the other and then both once again coming together and joining to return to their former state. They might also say that if such a thing had ever happened it would have been observed by many all over the world and would also have been recorded by historians and astronomers. Both these objections are, however, not tenable. As Maudûdî points out,[2] if one believes in God, one would not find any difficulty in acknowledging that He in His infinite power can do anything inconceivable on man's part or what appears to him to be against the law of nature. After all nature itself is God's creation. But even from the point of view of modern science which supposes that the solar system came into being as a result of a gigantic explosion in the sun it would not appear totally inconceivable that the moon could split apart on account of an internal explosion and the parts then came together once again as a result of their magnetic attraction. As regards the second objection, the moon is sighted only in half of the world at a time. There was also no prior announcement or expectation of the phenomenon. Nor were astronomical observatories so developed at the time. Also the incident was a very quick one. It is thus no wonder that it was not sighted by many and not recorded by them.

III. THE YEAR OF GRIEF (*'ÂM AL-ḤUZN*)

The end of the boycott and the coming out of Banû Hâshim and Banû Al-

1. *Bukhârî*, no. 3868; *Musnad*, III, 165.
2. Maudûdî, *op.cit*, II, 617-618.

Muṭṭalib from their mountain retreat undoubtedly marked a triumph on their part and on the part of the Prophet. But that very year, the tenth year of the mission, has been designated by the Prophet himself as the 'Year of Grief'. This is because shortly after the end of the boycott and in the second half of that year he lost two of his nearest and dearest ones. Both his uncle 'Abû Ṭâlib and his wife Khadîjah (r.a.) died at an interval of only a month or so.[1] From a worldly point of view the loss was irreparable and it dealt a severe blow to him personally. 'Abû Ṭâlib was the head of the clan and it was because of his unflinching support for the Prophet that Banû Hâshim and Banû Al-Muṭṭalib stood unitedly against all the other clans. His removal from the scene caused a vacuum in the clan leadership which was never filled. More importantly, the unity of the two clans on the question of protecting the Prophet received a set-back and, as it appears, soon broke down so that the Prophet had before long to seek help and protection from other quarters. Khadîjah (r.a.), on the other hand, was the Prophet's most devoted and trusted friend who shared his happiness and sorrow, consoled and comforted him in moments of distress and encouraged and helped him against all imaginable odds. The loss of such a companion was hard to overcome. Throughout the rest of his life the Prophet cherished her noble memory.

Two incidents in connection with 'Abû Ṭalib's death deserve mention. It is reported by Ibn Isḥâq that on the eve of 'Abû Ṭâlib's death the Quraysh leaders waited on him at his death-bed and requested him to effect a compromise between them and his nephew (the Prophet). Accordingly he called the Prophet and informed him of the Quraysh leaders' proposals. As usual, however, the Prophet once again invited them to accept Islam but they refused to do so.[2] If the report is correct, it shows that the Quraysh leaders, on the failure of their boycott and in view of the approaching end of 'Abû Ṭâlib's life, once again attempted to induce the Prophet to a make a compromise with them.

The second incident is that when 'Abû Ṭâlib was on his death-bed the Prophet entreated him to abandon his old faith and make a profession of Islam, adding that that would enable him (the Prophet) to intercede for him ('Abû Ṭâlib) with Allah. The proud old man, however, declined to do so on the plea that if he professed Islam at the moment of his death the Quraysh

1. The reports differ regarding the order of death of the two.

2. Ibn Hishâm, I, 417.

leaders would taunt him by saying that he did so because he was afraid of death.[1]

The removal of 'Abû Ṭâlib from the scene acted as a signal for the Quraysh leaders' renewed hostility towards the Prophet. That they did not immediately proceed to get hold of the Prophet and do away with him was due understandably to the fact that it took some time for Banû Hâshim and Banû Al-Muṭṭalib to abandon him, while the Quraysh leaders themselves had not as yet recovered from the differences within their own ranks which had led to the abandonment of the boycott. It was most probably due to this weakness on their part that they, as noted above, once again made an attempt for a compromise. However, those who had not yet dared assault the Prophet now took courage to do so. The incidents noted earlier[2] of Abû Jahl's or someone else's placing a heap of dust on the Prophet's shoulder while he was prostrating himself in prayer at the Ka'ba and that of 'Uqba ibn 'Abî Mu'ayiṭ's similarly heaping the abdominal wastes of a slaughtered animal on the Prophet's back while prostrate in prayer belong most probably to this post-boycott period.

After 'Abû Ṭâlib's death it did not take long for 'Abû Lahab to establish his hold over Banû Hâshim and make them withdraw their protection from the Prophet. Initially, however, 'Abû Lahab appears to have proposed to act in line with the mood of his clan and thereby to get his leadership accepted by them. Ibn Sa'd has a report that on 'Abû Ṭâlib's death 'Abû Lahab told the Prophet that like the latter he ('Abû Lahab) would also do his duty as an uncle and would protect him against the enmity of the others. It is further stated that when one day the Prophet was being abused by Ibn al-Ghayṭalah (Qays ibn'Adiyy al-Sahmî) 'Abû Lahab opposed him. Ibn al-Ghayṭalah raised a hue and cry over 'Abû Lahab's attitude and complained to the other Quraysh leaders that he had abandoned his ancestral religion. Thereupon the Quraysh leaders came to 'Abû Lahab to ascertain the truth. He told them that he had not abandoned his ancestral religion but that as the leader of Banû Hâshim and as an uncle it was his duty to protect the Prophet from any personal harm being done to him. They went away but did not leave the matter there. A few days afterwards 'Abû Jahl and 'Uqbah ibn Abî Mu'ayṭ insti-

1. *Bukhârî,* no. 4771 ; *Muslim,* no. 24 . See also Al- Qurṭubî, *Tafsir.* 8/272; Ibn Kathîr, *Tafsir,* VI,256; Al-Bayhaqî *Dalâ'il* etc., II, 242, 243; Ibn al-Jawzî, *Al-Wafâ etc.*,200-209.

2. *Supra,* pp. 652-654. See also Ibn Hishâm, 1,416.

gated 'Abû Lahab to ask his nephew about the fate of his ('Abû Lahab's) father 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib. 'Abû Lahab did so and was told by the Prophet that 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib would be where the others of his people would be. When 'Abû Lahab reported this to the Quraysh leaders they told him that it meant that his father would be in hell.'Abû Lahab therefore sought a clarification from the Prophet who then told him that like other unbelievers and polytheists 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib too will be in hell. The report says that at that reply of the Prophet 'Abû Lahab turned against him and vowed to remain for ever his enemy.[1] Whatever the truth about the details in this story it shows how 'Abû Lahab was quickly won over to their side by the Quraysh opponents of the Prophet.

That the Prophet soon lost the solid support of his clan is evident from the fact that he henceforth sought support and protection from the other tribes of Arabia; and in the course of the same search for support he visited Ṭâ'if in the second half of the same year. Before noticing these developments, however, it would be worthwhile to take note of the orientalists' views and assumptions regarding the Makkan opposition to the Prophet.

1. Ibn Sa'd, I, 210-211

CHAPTER XXXI

THE MAKKAN OPPOSITION AND THE ORIENTALISTS: WATT'S THEORY ABOUT THE CAUSES AND BEGINNING OF OPPOSITION

I. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

The orientalists' views about the Makkan unbelievers' opposition to the Prophet may be considered under three main headings: (a) their analysis of the causes and beginning of opposition; (b) their assessment of the nature and extent of the opposition and (c) the unbelievers' objections *vis-à-vis* the orientalists' views. The present and the following two chapters deal respectively with these three aspects of their views.

So far as the theme of the causes and beginning of opposition is concerned it is mainly the views of Watt that call for attention if only because he advances a new theory in this respect though it draws directly and indirectly on the views of his predecessors. The views of Muir and Margoliouth are more or less similar in this regard and these are also largely in accord with the information given in the sources.

Agreeing in essence with Ibn Isḥâq's statement Muir says that general opposition to the Prophet was organized when he began "publicly to summon his fellow-citizens to the faith" and to abuse the idols.[1] The main reason, according to Muir, was the Makkans' attachment "to the worship of the Kaaba", "the glory of Mecca and the centre of pilgrimage from all Arabia". They apprehended that this "was in danger of being set at nought". Hence they were determined to crush the doctrine and to force its followers to abandon it.[2]

Echoing more or less similar views Margoliouth says: "Mecca lived mainly by its being a religious centre" and the pagan institution of the four months of peace. The Makkans feared, he writes, that the Prophet aimed at destroying the Ka'ba and the position of Makka as the religious centre. "An early revelation seems intended to reassure the Meccans on this point."[3] Further on he says that the declaration of "There is no God but Allah" was the

1. Muir, *op.cit.*, 3rd edition, 61.

2. *Ibid.*

3. Margoliouth, *op.cit.*, 119-120. The allusion is clearly to *sûrah* 106.

first and foremost cause of opposition.[1] He also says that there was a political reason for it. "Political and religious headships could not be separated", he observes, and the Makkans "were not prepared to see Mohammed at the head of the state."[2]

Thus both Muir and Margoliouth say in effect that the religious and economic interests of the Quraysh were bound up with the Ka'ba and that their opposition had thus both religious and economic motives behind it. And though Muir does not specifically hint here at the political reason, it is implicit in his treatment of the subject in general, particularly in his assumption about the Prophet's alleged "ambition" and political aims.

In his turn Watt builds on and elaborates the religious, economic and political motives behind the opposition hinted at by Muir, Margoliouth and others. In doing so, however, he advances a new theory. Taking his cue obviously from Muir's or rather Ibn Isḥâq's statement that general opposition to the Prophet was organized when he began publicly to preach and denounce the idols, Watt relates it to his, or rather Bell's, view about the message of the early Qur'ânic passages. It may be recalled that Watt attempts to show that the early Qur'ânic revelations do not contain strict monotheism and rejection of the idols.[3] Now he links that assumption, on the one hand, with the "mention" or denunciation of idols which occasioned the opposition and, on the other, with the spurious story of the 'satanic verses'. He suggests that since initially the Prophet's monotheism was only vague, his alleged utterance of the verses in recognition of the idols was only an expression of views he had hitherto held and that it marked an attempt at compromise between him and the Quraysh leaders. Therefore the alleged abrogation of the conciliatory verses meant a failure of the compromise. This failure, says Watt, led the Prophet to denounce the idols and consequently to the beginning of opposition to him. To formulate this theory Watt quotes a letter written by 'Urwah ibn al-Zubayr to the *Khalîfah* 'Abd al-Malik ibn Marwân (686-705/65-86 H.) and blends its information with the story of the 'satanic verses'. He also puts his own construction on some of the Qur'ânic passages noted earlier in connection with the story[4] in order

1. *Ibid.*, 120-121.
2. *Ibid.*, 144.
3. See *supra*, Chap. XXIII.
4. *Supra*, pp. 683-695. See also *infra*, pp.728-732.

to support as much his theory as the story itself. Finally he discusses what he thinks to be the religious, economic and political issues involved in the conflict between the Prophet and the Quraysh leaders.

II. WATT'S USE OF 'URWAH'S LETTER AND OF THE STORY OF THE 'SATANIC VERSES'

Watt starts his discussion by asking two questions: (a) "When and how did opposition" began and (b) what were "the main motives" behind it? In finding an answer to the first question he quotes in translation 'Urwah ibn al-Zaubayr's letter to *Khalîfah* 'Abd al-Malik ibn Marwân. This letter is transmitted by 'Urwah's son Hishâm and recorded by Al-Ṭabarî.[1] The main points of this letter may be recapitulated, using Watt's translation of it, as follows:[2]

(1) When the Messenger of Allah "summoned his tribe to accept the guidance" they did not at first hold back "but almost hearkened to him, until he mentioned their idols (tawâghît)."

(2) From Ṭâ'if "there came some of the Quraysh, owners of property (*sc.*there)" and opposed him and "roused against him those who obeyed them. So the body of the people turned back from him".

(3) "Then there was a time of extreme trial (*fitnah*) and upheaval for the people of Islam...."

(4) "When the Muslims were treated in this way" the Prophet asked them to "go away to the land of the Abyssinians" and the main body of them went there.

(5) The Prophet himself continued to stay at Makka."For years they (*sc.*Quraysh) continued to act harshly to those of them who became Muslims....."

Out of this document Watt makes three points: (a) The "first active oppo-

1. Al-Ṭabarî, *Târîkh*, II, 328-329 (I/1180-1181)

2. Watt, *M. at M*, 100-101. The Arabic text as given by Al-Ṭabarî runs as follows:

حدثنا علي بن نصر بن علي الجهضمي ، وعبدالوارث بن عبدالصمد ابن عبدالوارث . قال علي بن نصر : حدثنا عبدالصمد بن عبدالوارث ، وقال عبدالوارث : حدثني أبي . قال : حدثنا أبان العطار ، قال : حدثنا هشام بن عروة ، عن عروة ، أنه كتب إلى عبدالملك بن مروان : أما بعد ، فإنه - يعني رسول الله ﷺ - لما دعا قومه لما بعثه الله من الهدى والنور الذى أنزل عليه ، لم يبعدوا منه أول ما دعاهم ، وكادوا يسمعون له ، حتى ذكر طواغيتهم . وقدم ناس من الطائف من قريش لهم أموال ، أنكروا ذلك عليه ، واشتدوا عليه ، وكرهوا ما قال [لهم] ، وأغروا به من أطاعهم ، فانصفق عنه عامة الناس فتركوه إلا من حفظه الله منهم ؛ وهم قليل ؛ فمكث بذلك ما قدر الله أن يمكث . ثم ائتمرت رءوسهم بأن يفتنوا من تبعه عن دين الله من أبنائهم وإخوانهم وقبائلهم ، فكانت فتنة شديدة الزلزال على من اتبع رسول الله ﷺ من أهل الإسلام ، فافتتن من افتتن ، وعصم الله منهم من شاء ، فلما فعل ذلك بالمسلمين ، أمرهم رسول الله ﷺ أن يخرجوا إلى أرض الحبشة - وكان بالحبشة ملك صالح يقال له النجاشي ، لا يظلم أحد بأرضه ، وكان يثني عليه مع ذلك صلاح ، وكانت أرض الحبشة متجرا لقريش يتجرون فيها ، يجدون فيها رفاغا من الرزق ، وأمنا ومتجرا حسنا - فأمرهم بها رسول الله ﷺ ؛ فذهب إليها عامتهم لما قهروا بمكة ، وخاف عليهم الفتن ، ومكث هو فلم يبرح ، فمكث بذلك سنوات ، يشتدون على من أسلم منهم . ثم إنه فشا الإسلام فيها ، ودخل فيه رجال من أشرافهم .

sition" was due to the "mention of idols (presumably in the Qur'ân)"; (b) "some Quraysh with property in at-Ṭa'if were the leaders of the movement against Muḥammad" and (c) "all this preceded the migration to Abyssinia". Watt adds that there is "not much difficulty" in accepting the last two points but "there is some about the first". For Nöldeke's and Bell's dating of the Qur'ân gives many passages, "prior to the mention of idols", that contain or imply opposition to the Prophet. Also, notes Watt, 'Urwah was writing seventy years after the events, and he might have merely *inferred* that "the attack on polytheism must have been the cause of the opposition then because it led to much opposition later". Watt further points out that it is "conceivable, but not likely" that the 'mention of idols' refers to the 'satanic verses', for that would imply that the "Quraysh were annoyed because the shrine of at-Ṭâ'if was being given too much prominence" and its people placed at par with the Makkans.[1] Nevertheless Watt accepts "provisionally" the first point, namely, that "more active opposition appeared after the mention of the idols"; for the reference made by 'Urwah "to the Quraysh of at-Ṭâ'if" indicates that he had "some good source of evidence independent of the Qur'ân."[2]

It is worth noting that so far as the first and third of Watt's points, namely, that the first active opposition was due to the "mention" of idols and that "all this preceded the migration to Abyssinia" are concerned, these are very much clear from the works of Ibn Isḥâq and others. Therefore, obviously, Watt's main reason for invoking 'Urwah's letter is to bring home the second point, namely, as he puts, that "some Quraysh with property in at-Ṭâ'if were the leaders of the movement against Muḥammad"(ﷺ). Before proceeding to notice how he seeks to do that, a few remarks may be made on his above noted statements. The "difficulty" of which he speaks in connection with 'Urwah's letter, particularly in accepting the first point, is Watt's own creation. He conceives the early passages of the Qur'ân to be devoid of strict monotheism and denunciation of the idols, which is a totally wrong assumption, and on that basis regards 'Urwah's letter as striking a new note. The fact is that neither are the early passages of the Qur'ân devoid of strict monotheism and denunciation of the idols, nor is 'Urwah's evidence "independent" of, that is different from, that of the Qur'ân. Watt himself presumes

1. Watt *M at M.*,101. He mentions subsequently that Al-Lât, Al-'Uzzâ and Manat were the "reigning goddesses" of Ṭâ'if, Nakhla and Qudayd respectively.

2. *Ibid.*

that the mention of idols spoken of is that in the Qur'ân. As shown before,[1] not only is Watt's selection of the early passages purposeful and defective, his interpretation of them is also faulty. The early passages do contain strict monotheism and they do denounce the worship of idols. As Watt now admits, even Nöldeke's and Bell's dating gives many passages in which opposition to the Prophet is asserted or implied. That means the criterion adopted by Watt to reject a passage as not early simply because it speaks of or implies opposition to the Prophet is not valid. It may also be noted that the qualifying phrase, "prior to the mention of idols", applied to those passages of Nöldeke and Bell, is Watt's own description.

But though mentioning what he conceives to be a difficulty in accepting 'Urwah's information on the first point, Watt actually accepts it as the basis of his further discussion. Similarly, though he points out that the "mention of idols" spoken of by 'Urwah was "not likely" to have reference to the story of the 'satanic verses', Watt porceeds just to linking up the two. That is why he gives a twist to 'Urwah's statement when he says that according to it "some Quraysh with property in at-Ṭâ'if were the leaders of the movement against Muḥammad" (ﷺ). It may at once be pointed out that this is not exactly what 'Urwah says. He unequivocally says, in Watt's own translation, "from at-Ṭa'if there came some of the Quraysh, owners of property". The addition "(*sc.* there)" in brackets is Watt's own. There is no support for Watt's formulation in the words of 'Urwah.[2] And it is because of this twisting by himself that he finds it necessary to point out that if the "mention of idols" is related to the story of the 'satanic verses', it would imply that the "Quraysh were annoyed because the shrine of at-Ṭâ'if was being given too much prominence", etc. 'Urwah of course speaks of the Quraysh of Ṭa'if who were owners of wealth, not of the Quraysh of Makka having property at Ṭa'if, which is what Watt suggests. He does so with a view to relating the "mention of idols" with the story of the 'satanic verses'. That is why he gives a further twist to 'Urwah's information a little afterwards and postulates it as some Makkan leaders having business interests at Ṭa'if.[3] It needs to be recalled here that the story of the 'satanic verses', whatever its merit, relates to the Quraysh of Makka; and it was not with the people of Ṭâ'if that the

1. *Supra*, Ch.XXIII, See specially pp.569-582.
2. 'Urwah's wourds are:﴿ وقدم ناس من الطائف من قريش لهم أموال ... ﴾
3. *Infra*, pp.726-727.

alleged compromise was made.

It is not simply by twisting 'Urwah's information but also the story of the 'satanic verses' itself that Watt links up the two. Thus he next says that 'the most notable mention of the idols in the Meccan part of the Qur'ân is in Sûrat an-Najm (53 and thereby hangs a tale".[1] The 'tale' which he then reproduces is the spurious story of the 'satanic verses' which has been noted earlier.[2] It is therefore not necessary here to go into a discussion of its merits. Here we shall concentrate our attention only on how Watt uses the story to build up his theory. It may be noted, however, that all the versions of the story, despite their differences, agree in relating it as a consequence of the growth of opposition. They all also link it with the episode of the temporary return of the emigrants from Abyssinia. Watt, however, disconnects the story from the Abyssinian episode; he also treats it as an event prior to or leading to the growth of opposition.

After having reproduced the story Watt makes two points out of it. He says that (a) "at one time Muḥammad must have publicly recited the satanic verses as part of the Qur'ân" and (b) that "at some later time" he "announced that these verses were not really part of the Qur'ân and should be replaced by others".[3] Watt's reason for accepting these as facts is that "it is unthinkable that the story could have been invented later by Muslims or foisted upon them by non-Muslims".[4] He further says that since Al-Lât, Al-'Uzzâ and Manât were the reigning deities respectively of Ṭâ'if, Nakhlah and Qudayd (between Makka and Madina), the primary reference of the satanic verses was to the worship of those places. "The implication of the satanic verses is thus", says Watt, that "the ceremonies at three important shrines in the neighbourhood of Mecca is acceptable". Similarly, the implication of the abrogating verses saying that the worship of these places is unacceptable "is *not* a condemnation of the worship of the Ka'ba".[5]

As indicated above, we would not enter here into the merits of the story. Nor, perhaps, is it of much use in arguing the matter; for Watt would not just like to examine the evidences on which the story purports to stand. His best

1. Watt, *M. at M.*, 101.
2. *Supra*, chap. XXIX.
3. Watt, *op.cit.*,103.
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*, 103-104.

argument is that which he gives above. It may therefore be only pointed out that the story was not really invented by Muslims, nor foisted upon them by non-Muslims; but it was fabricated by those who dissimulated as Muslims and who are generally spoken of as *zindiqs* and who are indeed responsible for the currency of many forged traditions. Let us therefore only see how Watt makes up his story out of the others' story.

Having accepted the story as facts Watt proceeds to supply its "motives and explanations". He says that the Muslim scholars, "not possessing the modern Western concept of gradual development", found it difficult to explain how the Prophet "failed to notice the heterodoxy of the satanic verses". The truth is, says Watt, that the Prophet's "monotheism was originally, like that of his more enlightened contemporaries, somewhat vague" and "was not so strict that the recognition of inferior divine beings was felt to be incompatible with it". Probably, explains Watt, like the Judaeo-Christian concept of angels, the Prophet regarded Al-Lât, Al-'Uzzâ and Manât as celestial beings of a lower grade than God. Hence his uttering of the satanic verses did not mark "any conscious retreat from monotheism" but simply "an expression of views" which he "had always held".[1]

Having thus suggested that it was not unnatural on the Prophet's part to have uttered the satanic verses because these were in accord with the views he "had always held" and because his monotheism was initially only vague like that of his "more enlightened contemporaries", Watt gives the reason for the Prophet's doing so. He says that the "political implications of the verses are interesting" and asks: Was the Prophet "interested in gaining adherents at Medina and at-Ṭâ'if and among the surrounding tribes? Was he trying to counterbalance the influence of the leaders of Quraysh, who were opposed to him, by having large numbers of supporters? At the very least the mention of these shrines is a sign that his vision is expanding".[2]

The explanation thus given of the nature of the Prophet's faith and of his motive in allegedly uttering the satanic verses is illustrative only of Watt's own confusion and inconsistency. Not only is the assumption that the Prophet's monotheism was intitially vague and indistinct from that of his more enlightened contemporaries wrong and based on a faulty selection of the early passages of the Qur'ân, it is also inconsistent with the "concept of gradual development" of which Watt accuses the Muslim scholars of being

1. *Ibid.*,104.

bereft. For, if the Prophet's monotheism was not distinct from or an improvement upon the so-called vague monotheism of the time, he would not have attracted any special attention, as he no doubt did, and none would have cared to follow him, as by all accounts many did. A true concept of gradual development presupposes that Muḥammad's (ﷺ) claim to prophethood must have marked a disticnt and noticeable improvment upon the vague monotheism of his contemporaries. It is also somewhat incorrect to suggest, as Watt here does, that the vague monotheism of the time was compatible with a recognition of the efficacy of the goddesses. For, if by "enlightened contemporaries" Watt means the *ḥanîfs*, then these latter, by all accounts, had distinctly abandoned and denounced idol worship. If, on the other hand, the allusion is to the Jews and Christians of the time, then many of their beliefs and practices were of course not very distinct from polytheism.

Again, if the Prophet regarded Al-Lât, Al-'Uzzâ and Manât as celestial beings of a lower grade than God, like the Jews' and Christians' recognition of the angels, as Watt says, and if the recognition of the function of the goddesses mentioned was "simply... an expression of views which Muḥammad had always held", then it is not understandable why such recognition should have in any way impressed and pleased the Quraysh leaders or the neighbouring tribes, drawing them towards him. For, according to Watt, the Prophet had not as yet openly and distinctly turned against those idols, while the worship of them was already in vogue among those people without even the Prophet's approval of it. Why, again, the Prophet should try "to counterbalance the influence of the leaders of Quraysh, who were opposed to him, by having a large number of supporters" when, according to Watt, no opposition to the Prophet had as yet developed and no Quraysh leaders had as yet been opposed to him? Again, if the recognition given in the satanic verses meant that "the ceremonies at three important shrines in the neighbourhood of Mecca" were "acceptable", as Watt says, and if the withdrawal of that recognition was "*not* a condemnation of the worship of the Ka'bah", then how could it please or displease the Quraysh of Makka?

Watt of course attempts to explain why the Makkan Quraysh leaders should have been inclined towards making a compromise with the Prophet. Thus, having suggested that the recognition of the three shrines was a sign that Muḥammad's political vision was expanding, Watt draws attention to 'Abû al-'Âliyah's version of the story of the satanic verses and to the well-

known reports about the Quraysh leaders' offers of compromise to the Prophet and says that, on the whole, "the picture of Muḥammad's position given by the stories is probably near the truth" — that he was initially sufficiently successful to induce the Quraysh leaders to make "some sort of offer" to him. The Prophet, says Watt, "was to receive certain worldly advantages and in return make some acknowledgement of their deities... The promulgation of the satanic verses is doubtless to be linked up with this bargain".[1]

Now, the most blatant inconsistency in the above noted observations of Watt's is that he has hitherto said that the promulgation of the satanic verses meant a recognition of the deities of the three shrines at Ṭâ'if, Nakhlah and Qudayd and that this move by the Prophet implied, "at the least", that his political vision was expanding, that probably he was trying to "counterbalance the influence of the leaders of Quraysh, who were opposed to him". Now, in his immediately succeeding paragraph, Watt would have us believe that the promulgation of the satanic verses was the "bargain" which the Quraysh leaders made with the Prophet in lieu of their giving him "certain worldly advantages", that it meant an "acknowledgement of their deities". Does Watt mean to say that the very move which the Prophet is supposed to have made in order to counterbalance the influence of the opposing Quraysh leaders and to expand his sphere of influence was now accepted by those very Quraysh leaders as a bargain and as an acknowledgement of their deities? No confusion could have been worse confounded!

Again, how could this "acknowledgement of their deities" be a bargain for them if the Prophet had not previously turned against those deities and had only regarded them as "celestial beings of a lower grade than God"? After all, the position given to those goddesses in the satanic verses was no more than that of intercessors, i.e., of celestial beings of a lower grade than God. Again, by Watt's own admission, it was the Quraysh leaders who, in view of the Prophet's initial success, made the move for a compromise. It was therefore they who were to offer some substantial consideration to the Prophet; but the supposed compromise is surprisingly silent about that. Watt apparently relieves himself of this question by simply observing that of "details we cannot be certain". How then could one be so "doubtless" about the bargain when the details are admittedly so uncertain and when the

1. *Ibid.*, 105

alleged compromise is singularly silent about the consideration which the Quraysh leaders ought to have offered to the Prophet?

No less confusing and inconsistent is what is said next by Watt about the "abrogation of the satanic verses". He says that "the abrogation" of the verses meant the "failure of the compromise". As reason for this failure he says that the Quraysh leaders did not "double-cross" the Prophet but that he

(a) "came to realize that the acknowledgement of the Banât Allah, as the three idols (and others) were called, meant reducing God to their level".

(b) He also realized that since his "worship at the Ka'bah was not very different from theirs" at Ṭâ'if, Nakhlah and Qudayd, the compromise he had made "would mean that God's messenger was not greatly different from their priests and not likely to have much more influence; hence the reform on which Muḥammad had set his heart would not come about".

(c) He also realized that such "acknowledgement of the goddesses would lead to the failure of the mission he had been given by God".

(d) Further, since the "worship at the Ka'bah, which had previously been polytheistic, was being purified and for the Muslims at least being made monotheistic", the Prophet realized that if similar worship was carried on at several shrines, "the people of the Ḥijâz would inevitably suppose that several roughly equal deities were being worshipped".

(e) Also, the phrase Banât Allah, "daughters of God", "could be interpreted to mean that these were beings roughly equal with God; and that could not be reconciled with monotheism".

It must at once be pointed out that there was no question of abrogating the so-called satanic verses; for the alleged verses were never uttered by the Prophet. The story is a downright fabrication. But let us only see here the inconsistency in Watt's statements. It is said that the so-called abrogation meant the failure of the compromise and withdrawal of the "acknowledgement of their deities". This is in direct conflict with Watt's statement (at his p. 104) that the abrogation of the satanic verses was "*not* a condemnation of the worship of the Ka'bah". Secondly, Watt has hitherto suggested that the Prophet's monotheism was so vague till the utterance of the satanic verses that the recognition of the goddesses was not incompatible with it and that this recognition was given in response to the Makkans' desire for a compromise. But now he reverts from both these premises. He suggests, on the

1. *Ibid.*, 105-106.

one hand, that the Prophet "truned down the offer of the Meccans" because "he came to realize that the acknowledgement of the Banât Allah... meant reducing God to their level" and would "lead to the failure" of the mission given him by God. Also that the phrase "Banât Allah" might be interpreted to mean that "these were beings roughly equal with God; and that could not be reconciled with monotheism" (see a, c & d above). Does Watt mean to say that the Prophet, who had hitherto been only a vague monotheist, suddenly grew to be a strict monotheist and therefore broke the compromise? But Watt does not seem to stick to that position either. Thus, he immediately shifts his ground from Makka to the other shrines and observes that the Prophet set aside the compromise because his "worship at the Ka'bah was outwardly not very different from theirs" at those shrines and this would mean that "God's messenger was not greatly different from their priests and not likely to have much more influence" (see b above). But once again Watt shifts his ground and in effect contradicts the above statement and says that the worship at the Ka'ba, "which had previously been polytheistic, was being purified and for the Muslims at least being made monotheistic". Hence the Prophet set aside the compromise because if "similar worship was carried on at several shrines, the people of the Ḥijâz would inevitably suppose that several roughly equal deities were being worshipped (see d above). Does Watt mean here that recognizing the three goddesses would be similarizing the worship at the Ka'ba and the other shrines and making it monotheistic? At any rate, this last statement of his is a contradiction of his previous statement to the effect that the Prophet's worship at the Ka'ba prior to the making of the alleged compromise was not very different from theirs at those places.

Evidently these inconsistent and confusing statements of Watt are due to his double standards and dual loyalty. He first assumes that the satanic verses were intended by the Prophet to winning over the people of Ṭâ'if, Nakhlah and Qudayd; then he (Watt) suggests that the verses were uttered in response to the Quraysh leaders' desire for a compromise conceding to them an "acknowledgement of their deities". Watt starts with the basic assumption that the Prophet's monotheism till the utterance of the satanic verses was vague and not incompatible with the recognition of the goddesses; but then Watt seeks to explain the failure of the compromise and the Prophet's rejection of it by assuming that his monotheism was indeed incompatible with such a recognition of the idols. Watt suggests that the abrogation of the

satanic verses constituted a cancellation of the compromise with the Makkan leaders; yet he says that the Prophet did so because he apprehended misunderstanding by the people of the other places and that nonetheless the abrogation was "*not* a condemnation of the worship of the Ka'bah". Clearly Watt is ill-served by his loyalty once to the Makkan Quraysh and again to the shrines at Ṭâ'if, Nakhlah and Qudayd.

Thus having linked up, with a good deal of inconsistent and confusing statements, what is called the Prophet's break with the leading men of Makka with the story of the satanic verses Watt proceeds to show that this view is in accord with 'Urwah's information, namely, that some propertied Quraysh of Ṭâ'if took the lead in opposing the Prophet. In other words Watt now attempts to show why the Makkan leaders were interested in getting a recognition of the goddesses of the other shrines and why the withdrawal of that recognition angered them. He says that the "most likely explanation" of 'Urwah's statement is that those "were some of the leading members of Quraysh who were specially interested in the commerce of at-Ṭâ'if" and had brought the commercial activities of that place "within the orbit of Makkan finance". Hence the removal of recognition from the shrine of Al-Lât "must some-how or other have threatened their enterprises and stirred their anger against Muḥammad"[1].

As already pointed out, this formulation of the case is contrary to what 'Urwah says. He unequivocally says that some Quraysh people *came* from Ṭâ'if, *not* some Makkan Quraysh people having property or business connection at Ṭâ'if. The verb *qadima* (قدم) meaning "came" and the expression *nâs min al-Ṭâ'if* (ناس من الطائف) meaning people from Ṭâ'if leave no room for supposing that 'Urwah meant some Quraysh people of Makka having property or business connection at Ṭâ'if.

Whatever the meaning of 'Urwah's statement, the most telling objection to Watt's theory is that it does not explain why, of all the Quraysh leaders, only a few of them supposedly having material interests in Ṭâ'if should have taken the initiative in obtaining the Prophet's recognition of the goddesses not only of that place but also of those of the other places, notwithstanding the fact that his worship at the Ka'ba, as Watt would have us believe, had hitherto been not clearly distinguishable from that performed at those places and the goddesses at the Ka'ba itself had as yet not been denounced and

1. *Ibid.*,106-107.

abandoned? Any intelligent person, specially a businessman, would under the situation have rather followed the policy of letting the "sleeping dog lie" and would not have agitated the issue by pressing for recognition specifically of the goddesses of the neighbouring shrines. It needs also to be explained how the Prophet's recognition of the idols at those places would be of advantage to the commercial traffic there, or how his withdrawal of such recognition would adversely affect that traffic. After all, neither the continuance and discontinuance of the worship of those idols there, nor the commercial operations connected with them were till then in any way dependent upon his recognition or non-recognition.

Watt states that the "removal of recognition from the shrine of al-Lât must somehow or other have threatened their enterprises and stirred their anger against Muḥammad". This could have been so if his mission had already threatened the Quraysh leaders' business at Makka; and if that had happened, then there would have been no need for them to seek a recognition of the goddesses of the other places alone, nor perhaps the need for the story of the satanic verses, to explain the growth of opposition. And, as will be seen presently,[1] Watt suggests a little later that the commercial activities at Makka and the other places had become independent of the visits of tribes to the shrines. It should also be noted in this connection that Watt's theory of the Makkans' attempt at and success in bringing Ṭâ'if within the orbit of Makkan finance, as shown earlier,[2] is totally wrong.

III. WATT'S HANDLING OF THE QUR'ÂNIC PASSAGES

Next Watt attempts to show that the "view contained in the letter of 'Urwah", namely, the "mention of idols" marking a "critical stage" in the Prophet's relation with the Quraysh leaders, is confirmed by the Qur'ânic testimony. He cites three Qur'ânic passages, namely, 17:73-75 (75-77), 39:64-66 and 6:137, and says that though these passages are possibly early Madinan, "they are connected with the satanic verses and their abrogation".[3] He then refers to the promulgation of *sûrat al-Kâfirûn* (109) and remarks that it marked a "complete break with polytheism" and made "compromise impossible for the future".[4] He further observes that this *sûrah* together with

1. *Infra*, pp.734-736.
2. *Supra*, Ch. IX.
3. Watt, *M. al M.*, 107.
4. *Ibid.*

the passages 6:56 and 6:70 suggest" "that the temptation to compromise was present to Muḥammad for a considerable time". In this connection he also says that "the precise teaching of the Qur'ân about idols during the Meccan period "is to show that their worship is pointless because they are "powerless to benefit or harm a man, and in particular they do not intercede on his behalf".[1] "The Qur'ânic attack on idols is not extreme at this period", he says. Once again drawing attention to the phrase *Banât Allah* Watt says that since it implied that "the idols were roughly comparable with God", this was "chiefly denied when the satanic verses were abrogated".[2] He then concludes that the Prophet had initially sufficient success "for the heads of Quraysh to take him seriously. Pressure was brought to bear on him to make some acknowledgement of the worship at the neighbouring shrines. He was at first inclined to do so", but eventually through "Divine guidance, as he believed, he saw that this would be a fatal compromise". Hence the "rejection of polytheism was formulated in vigorous terms and closed the door to future compromise".[3]

It is thus not so much for 'Urwah's information as for Watt's own theory and the story of the satanic verses that confirmation is sought in the Qur'ân. As already noted, some narrators of the story indeed attempt to link it with some Qur'ânic passages. How and where they err in doing so have been pointed out.[4] Here we shall confine ourselves only to a consideration of Watt's analysis and interpretation.

His conclusion that because the Prophet had sufficient success at the initial stage the Quraysh leaders brought pressure to bear on him "to make some acknowledgement of the worship at the neighbouring shrines" is basically wrong. For it is plainly absurd to think that the Quraysh leaders would press for an "acknowledgement of the worship at the neighbouring shrines" if the Prophet had not already denounced idolatry and if his mission had not already posed a threat to their interests. If the Prophet had not denounced the worship of the idols at the Ka'ba, as Watt would have us believe, then there was no reason for the Quraysh leaders to think that he was against the "worship at the neighbouring shrines". The most unreasonable aspect of Watt's

1. *Ibid.*
2. *Ibid.*,108.
3. *Ibid.*,108-109.
4. *Supra*, pp. 961-976.

conclusion is that while the traditional accounts and his own admission show clearly that it was the Quraysh leaders who sought a compromise, Watt now completely reverses the position and suggests that it was the Prophet, according to the Qur'ânic testimony, who was tempted to make a compromise and the temptation was present to him for a considerable time.

Watt says that in one of the Qur'ânic passages, namely, 17:75-77 (73-75) "the nature of the temptation is unspecified; in the other (39:64-66) it is definitely to acknowledge 'partners' to God. These passages also state that for Muḥammad the consequences of compromise would have been serious, eternally as well as temporally..." Another passage, 6:137, according to Watt, states that though the idolators "acknowledge God formally, in practice he is not so fully acknowledged as are the idols. That is the sort of fact which may have shown Muḥammad that the compromise would not work".[1]

Let us now consider the passages. As regards the first mentioned passage, 17:73-75, it has already been cited and considered in connection with the spurious story of the satanic verses. It need not therefore be quoted here. It would suffice if we only mention its implications. These are: (a) that the unbelievers made determined efforts to make the Prophet agree to a compromise formula by fabricating something else as God's words than what had been revealed to him; (b) that if God had not made him firm in his conviction he could have inclined towards them a little. The main emphasis of the passage is on the second point. It stresses that God protected the Prophet against the machinations of the unbelievers so that he did not even incline towards them a little. The consequences of which he is warned are intended to further steel his determination against even the slightest deviation from the right course. Contrary to this clear import of this passage Watt reads in it the presence of a "temptation" on the Prophet's part to compromise! The passage shows, however, that it was the unbelievers who attempted to make the Prophet deviate from his mission but he did not even incline towards them a little because of Allah's protection and plan.

The second passage cited by Watt, namely, 39:64-66, runs as follows:

﴿قل أفغير الله تأمرونّي أعبد أيها الجـٰهلون * ولقد أوحي إليك وإلى الذين من قبلك لئن أشركت ليحبطنّ عملك ولتكوننّ من الخـٰسرين * بل الله فاعبد وكن من الشـٰكرين﴾ (٣٩: ٦٤-٦٦)

:Say: Is it other than Allah that you ask me to worship, o you fools? And it has already been revealed to you and to those before you that if you set partners (with

1. Watt, *op.cit.*, 107.

Allah) your work shall certainly fall through and you shall be among the losers. Nay, worship Allah and be of the grateful ones." (39:64:66).

Three things are clear from the above passage. First, it is a firm rejection of a solicitaion by the unbelievers. Second, it is couched in very strong terms, characterizing the unbelievers' proposal as foolish and calling them fools on that account. Third, it states that even before that foolish proposal was made, it had already been revealed to the Prophet and to "those before him" (i.e. the previous prophets) to shun and reject idolatry and polytheism of any shade. By no stretch of the imagination could any person suggest that this passage specifies the nature of the "temptation" which is "definitely to acknowledge 'partners' to God". It is the unbelievers who, by the clear purport of the passage, were the ones who sought a compromise and attempted to make the Prophet agree to it. Their proposal was treated with such contempt that the rejection was implied in the question directed towards them. The succeeding two *'âyahs*, 65-66, are no specification of the alleged temptation. Though apparently addressed to him they are, like many such passages in the Qur'ân, addressed in fact to the Makkans and unbelievers in general through the Prophet, telling them that they had already been informed of the impropriety and evil consequences of polytheism. This is as it should have been. For the unbelievers would not have sought some sort of recognition of their gods and goddesses, as this passage and the one cited before indisputably show, unless the Prophet had turned against their worship. Here also Watt seeks to support a conclusion which is directly contradicted by the text of the passage he cites. Incidentally, this passage very clearly states that it had already been revealed to the Prophet asking him to shun all shades of setting partners with God. Thus the passage which Watt himself cites disproves his theory that before the unbelievers came forward with their proposal for a compromise no revelation condemning idol worship had been given out by the Prophet.

More inaccurate is Watt's citation of 6:137 (136) in support of his contention that because the idolaters did not acknowledge God "so fully" as they did their idols, the Prophet realized that "the compromise would not work". The obvious inconsistency in this formulation is that hitherto the theme of the Prophet's supposed 'temptation' to acknowledge the goddesses has been harped on; but here he is stated to be seeking a full recognition of God (Allah) from the unbelievers. He was indeed seeking from the unbelievers a full and true recognition of God, but the statement that he was seeking their

as full a recognition of God as their recognition of the idols is Watt's own formulation of the case. Similarly it is his own assumption that the unbelievers' not doing so led the Prophet to see that "the compromise would not work". Neither this last mentioned passage, nor the previously mentioned two, show in any way that a compromise had been made. On the contrary the first two passages demonstrate that it was the unbelievers who sought a compromise and that their offers were turned down. As regards the passage 6:136 Watt simply takes it out of its context and misconstrues it to show that the Prophet sought from the unbelievers as "full" a recognition of God as their recognition of the idols. That this is not at all the implication of the passage in question will be clear if we look at it. It runs as follows:

﴿ وجعلوا لله مما ذرأ من الحرث والأنعٰم نصيبا فقالوا هٰذا لله بزعمهم وهٰذا لشركائنا فما كان لشركائهم فلا يصل إلى الله وما كان لله فهو يصل إلى شركائهم ساء ما يحكمون ﴾ (٦:١٣٦)

"And they set apart for Allah, out of what He produces of crops and cattle, a part; then they say: This is for Allah, as they fancy, and this is for our partners (idols). But what is set apart for the 'partners' does not go over to Allah; while what is set apart for Allah goes over to their partners. Bad indeed is what they adjudge". (6:136).

The passage refers to a bad custom of the unbelievers, as the succeeding *'âyah* speaks of another of their bad customs, i.e., their killing their female babes. The custom alluded to here was that the unbelievers, on the occasion of a harvest or new births of heads of cattle, used to name a larger share of the expected produce for the idols which was in fact meant for their own use, while they used to name a small share for Allah, meaning it for charitable purposes. But if for any reason the share designated for the idols fell short of it they used to make it up by taking from the share designated for Allah; but they did not act on the same principle if for any reason the share designated for Allah fell short.[1] In saying this the passage does not really insist on an equality of treatment between Allah and the 'partners'; it simply illustrates the unbelievers' folly in setting partners with Allah by pointing out that all the crops and cattle in their entirety are only Allah's giving. It is also clear from the passage, as indeed from many other passages of the Qur'ân, that the unbelievers acknowledged the existence of Allah though they foolishly set partners with Him. As will be seen presently, Watt is not quite clear about this fact and this in turn lands him in a good deal of confusion.[2]

1. See for instance Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir*, II,179.
2. See below, text.

There was no question of the Prophet's seeking an equal recognition for Allah. His whole mission was directed against the sin of setting partners with Allah.

Thus does Watt misunderstand and misconstrue the passages he cites. They do neither substantiate 'Urwah's statement that on the Prophet's denunciation of the idols a group of propertied Quraysh of Ṭâ'if came and started the movement against him, nor do they corroborate the spurious story of the satanic verses which says that the Prophet made a compromise with the idolators but subsequently set it aside. The passages cited show only a firm rejection of the unbelievers' foolish proposals for a compromise. Neither a conclusion of a compromise nor a repudiation of that supposed compromise can be proved from the passages.

Watt's other remarks in this connection may be noted in passing. He says that the promulgation of *sûrat al-Kâfirûn* marked a "complete break with polytheism" and that henceforth "the rejection of polytheism was formulated in vigorous terms." At the same time he states that the main purpose of the Qur'ânic teaching during the Makkan period was "to show that the worship of idols is pointless" and that the "attack on idols is thus not extreme at this period." Clearly the two strains are inconsistent. Watt's confusion seems to have arisen from an inadequate awareness on his part, which he admits in a subsequent work of his,[2] that before the coming of the Qur'ân the Makkan unbelievers did recognize the existence of Allah as a higher being. It is because of this inadequacy in his information that he proceeds to state: "the idolators are said to regard the objects of their worship as "intercessors" which, "if taken strictly, would imply that they recognized some higher being...."[3] The same misconception underlies his laboured interpretation that the expression *Banât Allah* meant entities "roughly comparable to God." More importantly, it is this misconception on which he bases his main assumption that initially the Prophet's belief was only a "vague monotheism" not distinguishable from that of his "more enlightened contemporeries."

IV. WATT'S VIEW OF THE SOCIO-RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL ISSUES

Concluding his discussion on the "satanic verses" and the beginning of opposition Watt observes that since the Prophet was "concerned with social,

1. Watt, *op.cit.*, 107,109.
2. Watt, *Muḥammad's Mecca*, Edinburgh,1988, Preface.
3. Watt, *M. at M.*, 108.

political and religious conditions in Mecca" and was as such "dealing with live issues his religious decisions had political implications though he treated the religious aspect as fundamental". Therefore if the stories of offers from the Quraysh leaders are correct, then the Prophet "must have been aware of the political aspects of his decisions and in particular of his promulgation of the satanic verses and of the abrogating verses." Similarly in reciting *sûrat al-Kâfirûn* he must have been aware that "there could be no peace with Quraysh unless they accepted the validity of his mission" and therefore him as Prophet and "the leading political figure", consistently with the "Arab ideas of authority and wisdom." "The mention of the goddesses is thus properly the beginning of the active opposition of Quraysh," concludes Watt, "and Sûrat al-Kâfirûn, which seems so purely religious , made it necessary for Muḥammad to conquer Mecca."[1]

It may once again be pointed out that the theory of the so-called promulgation of the satanic verses and their abrogation marking the beginning of opposition to the Prophet is totally wrong. It is based, as shown above, on a series of confusions and inconsistencies. And here Watt attempts simply to incorporate in that theory the view of Margoliouth which, as noted earlier, says that one of the reasons for the Makkans' opposition was that "political and religious leaderships could not be separated, and they were not prepared to see Mohammed at the head of the state."[2] But while Margoliouth seems to place the onus of that awareness generally on the Quraysh leaders Watt, in his turn, places it mainly on the Prophet. And in doing so he introduces further inconsistencies. If the Prophet was concerned with social, political and religious issues and was as such aware of the political implications of his religious decisions, then he must have been so aware from the beginning of his mission. Indeed he started his mission by giving out that he had been chosen by Allah as His Prophet and Messenger. That claim itself was sufficient to arouse the political susceptibilities of the Quraysh leaders. In fact the sources show that much of their theoretical objections was directed against that claim. Watt says that the Prophet was aware of the political implications of his promulgation of the "satanic verses." This means that when he supposedly promulgated the "satanic verses" he must have obtained in lieu of his recognition of "their deities" some sort of their recognition of his position. Indeed such a recognition of his position was a prerequisite as

1. *Ibid.*, 109.
2. *Supra*, pp. 716-717.

much for his according the alleged recognition to the goddesses as for their seeking that recognition; for his recognition of their deities would be of no consequence for them and they would not care to seek it unless they were aware of, and acknowledged at the same time that his pronouncement carried weight and authority. The very theory of compromise and bargain presupposes such mutual recognition of each other's claim. But Watt says in the same breath, in fact in the same sentence, that the Prophet was aware of the political implications of the abrogating verses and that he promulgated the *sûrat al-Kâfirûn* because he saw that unless the Quraysh accepted the validity of his mission, i.e., unless they accepted him as Prophet and political leader, there could be no peace with them. Does Watt mean to say that the Prophet had made the alleged compromise without obtaining any consideration for his so doing or by surrendering his claim to prophethood? Or was the alleged compromise only a dictated peace? Clearly Watt fails to see the inherent inconsistency in his contention that the Prophet was aware of the political implications of his mission both at the time of his allegedly promulgating the satanic verses and also at the time of abrogating them. In attempting to link his predecessors' view of the political reason for opposition with his interpretation of the spurious story of the satanic verses and the beginning of opposition Watt indirectly echoes the theory of ambition on the Prophet's part. That is why he once makes the Prophet make the compromise with the Quraysh leaders being aware of its political implications, and once again makes him throw that compromise to the winds because of his awareness of the political implications of his so doing, suggesting, finally, that the conquest of Makka was an inevitable consequence of that political consideration. The difference between Watt's treatment and that of his predecessors is that, while generally they make the allegation directly, Watt makes it indirectly and somewhat confusingly by tagging it with untenable theories and inconsistent statements.

V. WATT'S VIEW OF THE "MOTIVE" AND "CHIEF REASON" FOR THE OPPOSITION

The inconsistency is all the more glaring in what is said about the Quraysh leaders' "motives" and "chief reasons" for their opposition to the Prophet.[1] Watt says that the "theory of economic fears because of attack on idolatry is best forgotten" because the Makkan trade "was now independent

1. Watt, *M. at M.*, 133-136.

of the visits of nomads to the Ka'bah or other sanctuaries" and because there is no record "in the Qur'ân or elsewhere" of "any attack on the worship at the Ka'bah...., it was only subsidiary features that were altered and purified at the conquest of Mecca." "The original attack on idols", recalls Watt, "was an attack on the worship at specific shrines in the neighbourhood;" but they were "not sufficiently important for their desertion to lead to a general ruin of Meccan trade."[1]

Now, the statement that there is no record in the Qur'ân or "elsewhere", i.e., in other sources, of any attack on the worship at the Ka'ba, that is on the worship of the idols there, and that it was only subsidiary features that were altered and purified at the conquest of Makka is utterly incorrect. Only a little while ago Watt states that the promulgation of *sûrat al-Kâfirûn* meant a "complete break with polytheism" and henceforth the "rejection of polytheism was formulated in vigorous terms". No one would take this "vigorous" rejection to refer only to idolatry elsewhere in Arabia but not at Makka and the Ka'ba. True, the Ka'ba is not mentioned specifically in connection with the denunciation of idolatry in the Qur'ân; but then the shrines at the other places also are not mentioned by name. And so far as "elsewhere", i.e., the other sources are concerned the reports are replete with references to attacks on the idols at the Ka'ba. Even the reports of Al-Zuhrî and 'Urwah which Watt himself quotes speak of uncompromising attacks on idolatry. Moreover, it is well known that on the conquest of Makka the idols at the Ka'ba were removed and destroyed. Thus it is only by ignoring the undisputed facts that one can hazard such a blatantly incorrect statement that it was only "subsidiary features" of the worship at the Ka'ba "that were altered and purified at the conquest of Mecca".

Secondly, by saying that the Makkan trade was independent of the visits of the Arabs "to the Ka'bah or other sanctuaries" and that those other sanctuaries were in any case not sufficiently important for their desertion to lead to a general ruin of the Makkan trade Watt here directly contradicts his earlier theory that the "removal of recognition from the shrines of al-Lât [at Ṭâ'if] must somehow or other have threatened the Quraysh leaders' enterprises and stirred their anger against Muḥammad". Watt seems to recognize the inconsistency. Hence he hastens to add that it "is almost certainly true" that "those particular individuals who had trade connections with the par-

1. *Ibid.*, 134.

ticular shrines involved in that attack were extremely annoyed" and that there were likewise other groups "whose special interests were adversely affected by some point" of the Prophet's teaching.[1]

Of course there were "other groups" whose sepcial interests were threatened by the Prophet's teachings; but that is not the same thing as the theory advanced earlier by Watt. It is not explained why the annoyance of the "particular individuals who had trade connections with the particular shrines involved in the attack" should have led to a general and organized opposition of all the Quraysh leaders, specially when it is emphasized that those particular shrines were in any case not sufficiently important for their desertion to lead to a general ruin of Makkan trade. It is also not understandable why even the so-called particular individuals should have been annoyed if, as it is very emphatically asserted, that the Makkans' trade "was now independent of the visits of nomads to the Ka'bah or other shrines". In fact this statement about the "particular individuals" and the "other groups" is only a poor attempt on Watt's part to escape from the inconsistency between his previous and present suggestions. These latter very clearly contradict the theory so laboriously built up earlier that the "withdrawal of recognition" from the other shrines led to the beginning of the general opposition of the Quraysh leaders as a whole.

A further effectual admission of the weakness and untenability of his earlier theory lies in what Watt finally says about the "chief reasons for opposition" which he now says were political. Once again reflecting Margoliouth's view Watt here says that the Quraysh leaders "saw that Muḥammad's claim to be a Prophet, if taken seriously, had political implications"; for according to the Arab notion "rule in the tribe or clan should go to him who had most wisdom".[2] If the Quraysh leaders believed "Muḥammad's warning", argues Watt, "and then wanted to know how to order their affairs in the light of it, who could be the best person to counsel them if not Muḥammad?" Watt adds that the Quraysh leaders also recognized "the opposition between the ethics of the Qur'ân" and their mercantile activities. And since "from the very first there was criticism of their individualistic attitude to wealth" they might have felt that "these ethical ideas would gain Muḥammad much political support". Some might even have "felt that this was a reopening of the old

1. *Ibid.*
2. *Ibid.*, 134-135.

dispute about policy between Makhzûm with its friends and the Ḥilf al-Fuḍûl".[1]

Thus does Watt finally link up the "chief reason for opposition" with his favourite theory of commercial and political rivalry between the *Aḥlâf* and the *Ḥilf al-Fuḍûl* groups of Quraysh. The untenability of that theory of acute commercial rivalry between the two groups of Quraysh, and of Watt's further suggestion in that connection that the Prophet in his youth had been ousted from the most profitable commercial operations has already been pointed out.[2] It has also been shown that some of the Quraysh leaders viewed the rise of the Prophet in the light of the inter-clan rivalry for leadership and further that the Prophet's mission cannot be explained in terms of that inter-clan rivalry; nor was he actuated by that sort of considerations.[3] Watt's, and indeed the orientalists' explanation of the material factors underlying the rise of Islam and the Quraysh's opposition to it is more or less an adaptation and elaboration of that unreasonable view of some of the Quraysh leaders. Without entering into that question again, we would simply point out here that these last mentioned statements of Watt effectively nullify his earlier theory about the beginning of opposition.

Watt here recognizes that the Prophet's mission was started with a claim to prophethood which, it is further recognized, had political implications that could not have been missed by the Quraysh leaders, nor did they miss them. Watt also recognizes here, as he indeed emphasizes it in his treatment of the primary message of the Qur'ân, that the warning about the life in the hereafter and about the Day of Judgement in particular, and the invectives against the Quraysh leaders "individualistic" and selfish attitude to wealth had been present in the Qur'ânic revelations since the very beginning. Thus by Watt's own admission the "chief reasons" which he now says determined the Quraysh leaders' attitude had been there since the inception of the Prophet's mission. There is thus no need to wait for the dubious incident of the "satanic verses" which is said to constitute a compromise and an acknowledgement of the goddesses at some other shrines, and the supposed abrogation of those verses which is said to constitute a unilateral rejection of that compromise by the Prophet and his withdrawal of recognition from the

1. *Ibid.*, 135.
2. *Supra*, Chap. IX; also pp. 236-237.
3. *Supra*, Ch. XXIV,and pp. 618-619.

other shrines only, to explain the beginning of opposition. That theory and Watt's present identification of the "motives" and "chief reasons for opposition" are antithetical.

As already pointed out, by the very implications of the warning about the Day of Judgement and by the text of the early Qur'ânic passages, the Quraysh leaders were asked to abandon the worship of idols and to adhere strictly to the principle of monotheism. Thus 'Urwah's, Al-Zuhrî's and Ibn Isḥâq's statements that the "mention", that is the denunciation, of the idols marked the beginning of opposition are substantially correct. These statements of theirs have reference to the beginning of open and public preachings on the one hand, and the growth of organized opposition on the other. 'Urwah's statement that some propertied men of Ṭâ'if came to organize the opposition to the Prophet might have been an incident in connection with that organized opposition, or it might have reference to persons like 'Utbah and Shaybah, sons of Rabî'ah, who had landed properties at Ṭâ'if and who were prominent leaders of the opposition to the Prophet. In any case, none of the above mentioned authorities implies that the "mention of idols" had reference to the so-called satanic verses and their abrogation. Watt gets hold of the spurious story and links it up with the "mention of idols" against the clear statements of the authorities, including 'Urwah, in order to justify, on the one hand, the alleged story of the satanic verses itself and, on the other, his own wrong assumption that the Prophet's initial teaching consisted of a vague and nebulous monotheism not inconsistent with toleration of the goddesses! In fact it is to sustain this latter view, which he has taken over from Bell, that Watt uses 'Urwah's report instead of Ibn Isḥâq's statement regarding the beginning of opposition and links up the expression "mention of idols" with the spurious story of the satanic verses, suggesting finally that the alleged "abrogation" of those verses meant only a denunciation of the worship of the idols at Ṭâ'if and other shrines only! But as shown above, this theory of the Prophet's initial belief being only a vague monotheism, of the Quraysh leaders' nonetheless seeking a recognition of the idols at the other shrines, though the Prophet had not supposedly as yet denounced the idols at the Ka'ba, and of their turning against him only because he had withdrawn his recognition of the idols of those other places, and that too when the desertion of the other shrines was not likely to affect Makkan trade, etc., is manifestly an absurd proposition involving a good deal of contradictions and inconsistencies.

In winding up his discussions on the chief reasons and motives of opposition Watt finally states that by "placing these grounds of opposition", that is, the apprehensions of the Quraysh leaders about their political and economic position, "in the forefront", he does "not imply that the Qur'ânic attack on idolatry met no resistance".[1] He explains that the Quraysh leaders had no "theoretical defence of paganism to offer", but they were actuated mainly by their inherent conservatism, their adherence to "the way of their fathers" and their consequent dislike of "innovation". Hence they were particularly stirred by the assertion that their ancestors were in hell.[2] Watt further says that although some of the Quraysh leaders were "thorough-going individualists", the others were "more conservative" and "retained a certain group loyalty". These latter, according to Watt, saw "in the tendency of Islam to cause sharp divisions within the family" a movement to undermine "the whole social structure". "Indeed", stresses Watt, "in a sense it was doing so". He concludes by saying that the "malaise" confronting the Prophet "had social, economic, political and intellectual" symptoms. Hence, though his message "was essentially religious", it necessarily "affected the other aspects, and consequently the oppostion had many facets".[3]

Of course the causes and nature of the unbelievers' opposition to the Prophet, as noted earlier,[4] were multi-faceted, social, religious, political and economic. This fact once again emphasizes the unreasonableness of linking the beginning and growth of opposition mainly or essentially with the spurious story of the satanic verses according to which, as Watt suggests, the Quraysh leaders sought only a recognition of the idols at the other shrines and their anger was excited because that recognition was withdrawn! Anyway, Watt here says that he does "not imply that the Qur'ânic attack on idolatry met no resistance". What does he mean here by this "Qur'ânic attack on idolatry? Does he mean to say its attack only on the acknowledgedly unimportant shrines and their idols outside Makka, or its attack on idolatry in general, which stirred the conservativeness of the Quraysh leaders and their "piety towards ancestors"? Clearly Watt's implication is the latter. Hence this statement of his runs counter to what he states on his previous

1. Watt, *M. at M.*, 135.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*, 136.
4. *Supra*, Ch. XXV.

page that there "is no record of any attack on the worship at the Ka'ba in the Qur'ân or elsehwere". He is also unclear about the meaning of the expresion "way of the fathers". This expression, which the Qur'ân shows the unbelievers often used in opposing the Prophet, does not simply signify their "conservatism" or their piety towards ancestors or their mere dislike of "innovation". It means more specifically the religion and way of worship of their fathers which is what the Quraysh leaders sought to uphold. They were not simply signifying their loyalty to their ancestors; they were really invoking the authority of their forefathers in support of their idol worship. After all, they did not believe in the hereafter and the Day of Judgement; so the statement that their ancestors were in hell could, in its plain sense, scarcely have stirred them to the depth.

Secondly, Watt says here that though "some" of the Quraysh leaders were "thorough-going individualists", the others were still wedded to the ideal of group loyalty and therefore saw in Islam a movement aimed at breaking up families and "undermining the whole social structure". We do not like to discuss the merit of this latter statement here. What is necessary and relevant to point out here is that earlier Watt has attempted to show that there was a considerable growth of individualism and consequently a decline in social solidarity which paved the way for introducing a new concept of social solidarity through religion. But here Watt would have us believe that only "some" persons were thorough-going individualists and the general body of the Quraysh were conservatives and attached to the ideal of group loyalty. "The Arabs were", he emphasizes here, "by nature or nurture conservatives".[1] And it was this inherent conservatism, reminds us Watt, this "reverence to tradition", which lay at the root of their opposition to the "innovation" of Islam. Clearly Watt here negatives what he has said earlier about the growth of individualism and the consequent break-up of social solidarity. Here he admits indirectly that the individualism of which he speaks earlier was in reality no effectual factor in social relationship of the time. Again, it is said here that Islam was breaking up families and undermining the social structure; but earlier it has been suggested that the break-up of social solidarity and the traditional system of security consequent upon the growth of individualism made room for the rise of Islam. Thus what has been stated earlier as the cause and background, is now stated to be the

1. Watt, *M. at M.*, p. 135.

effect and consequence. Clearly his treatment of the subject is both confusing and inconsistent.

To sum up, Watt's theory about the beginning of opposition, particularly his linking of 'Urwah's statement about the "mention of idols" with the spurious story of the satanic verses is untenable because:

(i) The premise that the Prophet's initial belief consisted of a vague monotheism tolerating the worship of the gods and goddesses is incorrect, based as it is (a) on an inadequate awareness of the fact that even before the Prophet's appearance the concept of Allah as the Creator and Supreme Lord had been prevalent among the Arabs; and (b) on a faulty selection and interpretation of the early passages of the Qur'ân.

(ii) The theory goes against the rationale of even the alleged story of the satanic verses itself. For, according to all the versions of the story, the so-called compromise between the Quraysh leaders and the Prophet took place *after* the growth of opposition to him and *not* before it.

(iii) The theory is also simply illogical because neither would the Quraysh leaders have sought an acknowledgement of their or others' deities nor would the Prophet have struck a bargain by doing so before he had denounced those deities.

(iv) The explanation that some Quraysh leaders of Makka who had trade connections with Ṭâ'if sought recognition of the deities at that place and at two other shrines, and that it was they who, after the Prophet's withdrawal of that recognition from those deities, started the opposition against him, is similarly illogical; for it is not explained how the supposed withdrawal of recognition from those deities would affect the Quraysh leaders' commercial interests at those places if no such adverse effect, consequent upon a non-recognition of the idols, had as yet been experienced at Makka. After all, the trading activities neither at Makka nor at the other places had begun only after the Prophet's recognition of the idols there!

(v) The theory is also inconsistent with Watt's other statement that the Makkan trade had become independent of the visits of nomads to the Ka'ba and the other shrines.

(vi) It is also inconsistent with what is finally stated as the "chief reason" and motive behind the Makkan opposition, namely, the political implications of the claim to prophethood and the attack on the Quraysh leaders' individualistic and selfish attitude to wealth. For, by Watt's own admission,

these chief reasons had been there since the beginning of the Prophet's mission and these could have occasioned their opposition irrespective of the question of the recognition or non-recognition of the gods and goddesses.

(vii) The theory is contrary to the texts of 'Urwah, Al-Zuhrî and Ibn Isḥâq, all of whom, while saying that the "mention of idols" was the cause of opposition, refer to the beginning of open and public preaching by the Prophet on the one hand, and to the growth of organized opposition to him, on the other. None of them connects this "mention of idols" with the spurious story of the satanic verses.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE ORIENTALISTS ON THE EXTENT AND NATURE OF THE OPPOSITION

1. MUIR'S AND MARGOLIOUTH'S VIEWS

As regards the extent and nature of the Makkan opposition the views of Muir are more less in accord with the sources, though he belittles the attempts of the Quraysh to put an end to the Prophet's life. He says that the persecution grew hot by degrees and that those who were "citizens", i.e., members of clans and their confederates, escaped serious injury for the most part, "being protected as a point of honour by their families; but the slaves, who had no such support, were exposed to much suffering".[1] Adopting Ibn Isḥâq's view Muir further says that it took some time, "three or four years" of the Prophet's mission before any general opposition to him was organized; but hostility once "excited, soon showed itself in acts of violence".[2] As time went on, and with the continued success of Islam, further observes Muir, the jealousy and enmity of the Quraysh were aggravated and the brunt of their wrath fell upon the converted slaves and strangers. He cites some instances of persecution, particularly those upon Bilâl and ‘Ammâr. Referring to the latter he adds that the Prophet, "under these trying circumstances", even permitted the persecuted individuals "to dissemble", in order that they might escape the torment.[3] That the Prophet and other members of important clans escaped serious physical assault was due to the institution of clan solidarity. In this connection Muir observes that when the men of Banû Makhzûm determined to chastize the converts of their own clan, particularly Al-Walîd ibn al-Walîd, "son of their aged chief, they repaired to his brother Hishâm, a violent oppressor of the Prophet, and demanded his permission; this he readily gave, but added: 'Beware of killing him; for if you do, verily I shall slay in his stead the chiefest among you".[4]

Thus Muir stresses mainly three things. He says that persecution and physical assaults came mainly on slaves and persons having no strong family or clan connection. Second, it was the institution of clan solidarity, i.e., the

1. Muir, *op.cit.*, 61.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*, 66.
4. *Ibid.*, 67.

duty of every clan to protect and defend its members against attacks and assaults by others, which was the main reason for converts of family and clan connection generally escaping serious persecution and physical harm. Third, Muir says that persecution upon slaves and humbler converts was sometimes so severe that the Prophet, in at least one instance, allowed the convert to "dissemble", i.e., to feign renunciation of Islam, in order to escape further persecution. In all these Muir is apparently correct; but he does not emphasize that just as the institution of clan solidarity worked in favour of protecting an individual, so it did in respect of persecution too. Even the slaves and confederates who were subjected to inhuman torture were done so by their respective masters or with their permission. Even the instance of Al-Walîd ibn al-Walîd which Muir cites to illustrate the point of clan solidarity really demonstrates the case of a convert of a respectable family being persecuted by the members of his clan with the permission of his family. It also shows that the type of persecution which was usually inflicted on converts was likely to cause the death of the victim. That is why Hishâm warned his clansmen to avoid going to such excesses. But that does not mean that the persecution which was generally inflicted upon converts of family and position was not severe and inhuman. The Prophet was of course protected by his clan; but that was not the case with most of the converts of family and clan.

In general Margoliouth follows Muir in all the three points made by him. Thus Margoliouth says that against the "humbler followers of the new doctrine violence was speedily put in motion; to increase, as time went, to burning with hot irons, or exposure face upwards to the midday sun;... Even strangers visiting Mecca who enquired after the Prophet were subjected to violence".[1] He adds that on account of such persecution five persons recanted and returned to paganism, while others, with the Prophet's approval, denied their faiths "with their lips, while believing in their heart".[2] This last remark of Margoliouth's is clearly an echo of what Muir says about the Prophet's allowing some of his converts to "dissemble" in order to escape further persecution. Like Muir, again, Margoliouth stresses that the "wealthy and powerful" converts generally escaped violence because of "that institution of paganism which made the ties of clan and family more powerful than

1. Margoliouth, *op.cit.*, 121-122.
2. Ibid., 122, citing Ya'qûbî, II, 28 and Ibn Sa'd, II,178.

any moral law".[1] The Prophet himself was protected by his clan, says Margoliouth, particularly by 'Âbû Ṭâlib, who undertook to protect him "from the fury of the orthodox, not without their approval".[2] In this connection Margoliouth remarks, somewhat regretfully, that had not the Makkan community been so tenacious "of the cult of clan, so timid of the consequences which arise from the shedding of kindred blood", and had the head of the Prophet's clan "let him be outlawed, then Mecca might have been rid of him, but Abu Ṭalib could not be persuaded to do this, and his veto blocked the way".[3]

Having thus agreed with Muir, Margoliouth strikes three new notes. He attempts to find, besides the clan spirit, 'Abû Ṭâlib's reasons for the role he played and remarks: "Perhaps Abu Ṭalib and his numerous family could not afford to abandon their wealthy relative, and, indeed, had Mohammed not had some power over his uncle, it is unlikely that the latter would have submitted to the inconvenience which his nephew's mission brought on him".[4] Second, Margoliouth suggests that since the Prophet was thus protected by his uncle and clan, the war between him and the Makkans was for a long time — eight or ten years — one of words. It was, "in the main, the history of a debate in which the speeches of the counsel of one side only are preserved".[5] And third, Margoliouth says that the Prophet's followers, according to the usual tendency of every new movement, became "aggressive" and endeavoured to interfere with the worship which they regarded as improper and this caused much trouble.[6]

As regards his first conjecture Margoliouth does not elaborate it. It is, however, difficult to attribute selfish motives to 'Abû Ṭâlib in his action of protecting the Prophet all through. Whatever might have been the case at the early stage of his mission, at the later stage, particularly during the period of the boycott and blockade, 'Abû Ṭâlib could not be said to have acted in the hope of material assistance for his numerous family from the Prophet's resources. Nor could the entire clan of Banû Hâshim and Banû al-Muṭṭalib have been persuaded to stand by 'Abû Ṭâlib's policy if he was seen to have acted out of self interest. In this connection it is well worth noting Muir's remarks about 'Abû Ṭâlib's character. He says: "The sacrifices to which Abu Talib exposed himself and his family for the sake of his nephew, while

1. Margoliouth, *op.cit.*, 122. 2. *Ibid.* 3. *Ibid.*, 123.
4. *Ibid.* 5. *Ibid.*, 123 and 125. 6. *Ibid.*, 125.

yet incredulous of his mission, stamp his character as singularly noble and unselfish. They afford at the same time strong proof of the sincerity of Mahomet. Abu Talib would not have acted thus for an interested deceiver; and he had ample means of scrutiny".[1]

As regards Margoliouth's second statement that the war between the Prophet and the Makkans was mainly one of words, it would be examined shortly[2] in connection with the orientalists' attitude towards the Makkan unbelievers' objections and arguments.

Regarding his third allegation, that of aggressiveness on the part of the new Muslims, Margoliouth says that the Qur'ân praises the iconoclastic conduct of Abraham and, since the early Madinan converts acted in the same style, "it is probable that the Makkan converts had set the example. Violent scenes were certain to be the result of such actions".[3] Margoliouth further suggests that the rules on the subject of food were also aimed at irritating the unbelievers; for, as the regulations, particularly the ban on partaking of meat offered to idols, rendered it "impossible for a Moslem to join in the meals of most of his countrymen... we can conjecture with ease the indignation with which this idea of purity was viewed by those whose conduct was impugned by it".[4]

This allegation of aggressiveness on the part of the Prophet's followers which, according to Margoliouth, was bound to result in violent scenes, is totally unjustified. The sources do not furnish a single instance of any violent scene having occurred on account of the alleged aggressiveness and iconoclastic zeal of the early Makkan Muslims. On the contrary it was the Quraysh leaders who appear from all the accounts to have adopted an aggressive attitude and whose interference with the Muslims' prayer in a secluded place occasioned the first recorded violent scene.[5] And that was only natural; for aggressiveness arises from a consciousness of one's own strength, however misconceived, and a corresponding notion of weakness of one's adversary, however mistaken that notion might have been. There is no evidence in the sources to suggest that the early Makkan converts were ani-

1. Muir, *op.cit.*, third edn., 103.
2. *Infra*, p.763 ff.
3. Margoliouth, *op.cit.*, 126.
4. *Ibid.*, 126-127.
5. *Supra*, pp. 652-653.

mated by such misconceptions. As regards the instance of Prophet Abraham, the Qur'ân cites it to emphasize the doctrine of monotheism, not to incite the new converts to undertake such feats. Also the instance which Margoliouth cites elsewhere of the Prophet and 'Alî together breaking the idols at the Ka'ba has reference to what happened after the conquest of Makka, not to the initial stage of the mission. Similarly misleading is the reference to the food regulations. The refusal to partake of meat offered to idols was a requisite of monotheism, not at all an expression of aggressiveness towards the unbelievers. Even previously to the appearance of the Prophet some of the *ḥanîfs* are known to have discountenanced such meals. Neither their actions nor those of the early Muslims, however, occasioned any ill-will between them and the unbelievers.

In his above mentioned views, Margoliouth seems to have reflected two tendencies that gained ground among the orientalists in general by the beginning of the twentieth century. These were to identify the nature and extent of the Makkan opposition by considering the references to it in the Qur'ân and, on that basis to suggest that the persecution of the Muslims was generally mild and that the opposition consisted mainly of a debate. Indeed writing about the same time as Margoliouth did, Leo Caetani, after referring to various passages of the Qur'ân, made these very suggestions.[1] The lines thus laid down were followed more or less by subsequent writers, particulary by Watt, as will be seen presently.

II. WATT'S VIEWS: (A) PERSECUTION OF MUSLIMS

Watt discusses the Makkan opposition mainly under three sub-headings: (a) Persecution of Muslims, (b) Pressure upon Banû Hâshim and (c) Offers of compromise to the Prophet. The first of these is considered in the present section.

Watt starts his discussion about the persecution of Muslims by quoting in his own translation Ibn Isḥâq's statement about 'Abû Jahl's role and says on that basis that the persecution of the Muslims consisted of (a) verbal attacks on influential persons; (b) economic pressure upon "lesser men" and (c) "bodily violence towards those without any influential backing".[2] Elaborating this statement Watt says that as "most" of the Quraysh clans were "sufficiently strong" and attached to the clan spirit to deal effectively with

1. Leo Caetani, *Ann.* I, 244 ff.
2. Watt, *M. at M.*, 117-118.

"anyone who maltreated a clansman or confederate, those exposed to physical violence were very few and comprised slaves and persons without any clear clan connexion". Clansmen and confederates could be disowned, points out Watt, as happened to 'Abû Bakr when he accepted Ibn al-Dughunnah's protection, or to the Prophet when he went to Ṭâ'if, but such action "tended to lower the clan's honour".[1]

It is not necessary to point out how closely Watt here follows his predecessors in stressing the function of clan solidarity. Both Muir and Margoliouth also speak about the sense of honour involved in protecting one's clansmen.

Continuing, Watt further says that when the sources speak of "the seduction or trial (*fitnah, yuftinu*) to which Muslims were subjected", they mean actions like those of 'Abû Jahl. "This is not, however, severe persecution". In this connection he blames "westren scholars" for accusing the sources of exaggeration and stresses that "a study of the details in Ibn Hishâm, at-Ṭabarî and Ibn Sa'd's biographies" goes "to suggest that the persecution was slight" and that the Western scholars' accusations "hardly apply to the earliest sources".[2]

As instances of the three above mentioned types of persecution Watt says that the Prophet "was attacked verbally and subjected to minor insults", though "the unpleasantness possibly increased after the death of 'Abû Ṭâlib".[3] The reduction of 'Abû Bakr's capital from 40,000 to 5,000 *dirhams* at the time of his migration to Madina is considered by Watt to have been "probably mostly due to economic pressure such as 'Abû Jahl threatened, and not the purchase of slaves, as stated in Ibn Sa'd, since a slave cost only about 400 dirhams".[4] As regards the third category, that of bodily violence, Watt thinks the "most notable examples" were the sufferings of slaves like Bilâl and 'Âmir ibn Fuhayrah. He adds a fourth category here, namely, "the application of pressure (including physical) to members even of influential clans and families by fathers, uncles and brothers". The instances of persecution of Al-Walîd ibn al-Walîd, Salamah ibn Hishâm, 'Ayyâsh ibn Abî Rabî'ah and the "manhandling of the confederate 'Ammâr ibn Yâsir and his

1. *Ibid.*, 118.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*

family by B. Makhzûm" are placed by Watt in this category.[1] He winds up his statements on this topic by once again emphasizing that the system of security prevailing in Makka — the protection by each clan of its members — "meant that a Muslim could not be seriously molested by a member of another clan, even though his clan had no liking for Islam", and that therefore persecution was limited to "(a) cases where clan relationships were not affected" and (b) actions, such as economic pressure and minor insults, that did not contravene the traditional code of honour or they affected "only the individual and not his clan."[2]

Before passing on to Watt's statements about pressure on Banû Hâshim it would be worthwhile to look a little closely into his above-mentioned analysis of *Persecution of Muslims*. The first thing to note is that here in effect he contradicts and nullifies his earlier thesis about the weakening or break-up of of what he calls "social", i.e., clan solidarity and the growth of individualism which, according to him, paved the way for finding an alternative system of security in religion and which accounts for the rise of Islam. Here he is forced to recognize that far from there being any noticeable slackening of clan solidarity, it was as strong as ever and that this was the main reason for the Quraysh leaders' failure to stop the Prophet and the Muslims. Even those whom he earlier identified as thorough individualists engaging themselves in "high finance" and business partnerships running across clan and family circles are now recognized to be very much wedded to the traditional system of security and social solidarity which prevented them from dealing effectively with the Prophet and the Muslims of their respective clans. Thus, far from the supposed lack of clan solidarity lying at the root of the rise of Islam, as Watt states earlier, it was the unabated strength of the age-old clan spirit which, by Watt's recognition, was the main reason for the Quraysh leaders' failure and, conversely, for the survival and growth of Islam at Makka. It was thus not that Islam rose because the pagan institution of clan solidarity had become sick and moribund, but that paganism itself contained in its bosom the germs of its own death.

A second noteworthy aspect in Watt's analysis is that he regards the western scholars' accusation of exaggeration on the part of the early Muslim chroniclers as unjustified. Apparently, thus, he differs from the other wes-

1. *Ibid.*
2. *Ibid.*, 119.

tern scholars; but in reality he aims at the same thing as they do. They allege exaggeration on the part of the Muslim historians in order to show that the persecution of the Muslims was not so severe as it is stated to be. Watt aims at the same thing; but he does so by attempting to show that the earliest sources do suggest that "the persecution was slight". The truth is that, while the Western scholars whom he castigates err in one direction, that of unjustifiably accusing the sources of exaggeration, Watt himself appears to err in the other direction, that of belittling the facts recorded by the sources. If one looks at the sources impartially one would not fail to see that the facts recorded by them do in fact give a picture of severe persecution. It was by no means "slight" or "mostly of a mild nature", as Watt would have us believe. He is also not quite correct in suggesting that the expressions *fitnah/ yuftinu* signified sundry annoyances and economic pressure upon "lesser men". The clear signification of the expressions was the attempt of the Quraysh leaders, by hook or by crook, to make the Muslims recant. And no slight or mild pressure could conceivably serve the purpose!

Thirdly, like Muir and Margoliouth, Watt labours under the same misconception that since persecution was limited to cases where clan relationships were not affected or did not contravene the norm and traditional code of honour, it was "slight" or mostly mild in nature. As already pointed out, persecution of the Muslims almost invariably followed clan lines. Even slaves were persecuted by their masters or with their leave. It was not that members of one clan proceeded to persecute the Muslims of another clan. The clans themselves decided to deal with their respective "renegades". In fact Watt's identification of a fourth category of cases of persecution, that of "application of pressure (including physical) to members even of influential clans and families by fathers, uncles and elder brothers" is superfluous and is based on a misunderstanding of the nature of things. In any event, it is basically wrong to suggest that since persecution was limited to cases where clan relationships were not affected, i.e., where members of the clan punished its own members and to cases that did not contravene the traditional norm and code of honour, it was necessarily slight or mild. War does not cease to be terrible and destructive because it is waged in accordance with "customary" and "conventional" laws of warfare; nor is persecution necessarily slight or mild because it is inflicted on its own members by a recognized institution, such as a tribe, a goverment or any other formally constituted organization. Nor does persecution cease to be inhuman because it is inflicted on slaves or

persons of no family or clan connexion. When the Quraysh leaders beat to death Ḥârith ibn 'Abî Hâlah in the precint of the Ka'ba itself[1] because of his supporting the Prophet, that action does not appear to have been considered by them contrary to their norm or code of conduct. Nor was the torturing to death of Yâsir, his wife Sumayyah and their son 'Abd Allah regarded any the more outside the norm of the Quraysh leaders. When Al-Walîd ibn al-Walîd was given over by his family to their clansmen to make him recant by any means short of putting him to death, the persecution upon him was not conceivably only slight or mild; for severity in persecution does not necessarily start with first putting the victim to death. When the Quraysh leaders publicly resolved to kill the Prophet, making no secret of their resolution, it was no light matter, nor was their hostility only of a mild nature. Nor did they stop simply at resolving; they made several attempts, in all technical sense of the term, to carry out their resolution in practice. Nor did the Quraysh leaders remain within the bounds of their norm and traditional code of conduct. Disowning a clansman was an abnormal and dishonourable act to them, as Watt recognizes. They did even that. Not simply 'Abû Bakr and the Prophet, but a whole host of others were disowned, excommunicated and put out of the pale of the clan security system, to be assaulted and killed with impunity by any hostile person or group of persons. In the then Arabian situation nothing could be a more extreme and untraditional step than this measure of making a whole group "stateless" and "unpersons" and exposing them to all imaginable dangers. It was this situation which compelled a considerable number of the converts to seek shelter and security in a foreign land. Even the whole clan of Banû Hâshim (with Banû al-Muṭṭalib) were excommunicated, boycotted and economically blockaded by all the other Quraysh clans for the sole purpose of procuring the surrender of the person of the Prophet to them for their seeing an end of him. In adopting this measure the Quraysh clans flouted another time-honoured Arab custom, that of helping and protecting a blood relation, *ṣilat raḥim*. And when after 'Abû Ṭâlib's death Banû Hâshim withdrew its protection from the Prophet, he had to seek shelter and support from the neighbouring town of Ṭâ'if where, far from being put to mild pressure, he was seriously assaulted and manhandled. If all these were only instances of "slight" and "mild" persecution and hostility, then the standard of severity with which these have been judged must be terribly high indeed!

1. *Supra*, p. 528.

Watt considers the Qur'ânic evidence on the subject a little later on[1] and says that it confirms in general the picture derived "from the traditional historical material", namely, "that the persecution of the Muslims was mild and did not include any acts strictly forbidden by custom".[2] He also says that verbal criticisms and disputations were the "chief feature of the opposition" and that the principal hostile activity as described in the Qur'ân was *kayd* and *makr* which, though they might "have led potentially to disaster", were "always within the letter of the law".[3] Therefore, emphasizes Watt, "there is no evidence for any severe persecution or anything that could be called oppression".[4] In this connection Watt refers particularly to the Madinan passage 16:110 (according to Watt 16:111) which speaks of the Muslims as having migrated to Madina after they had been, in Watt's words, "tried or tested (*futinû*)" which "need not imply anything more than *kayd*, together with family pressure".[5] He also refers to another passage, 85:1-7, and says that the story of the men of the trench" (*'ukhdûd*) related therein, though it might "reflect persecution at Mecca", Western scholars are inclined to regard it as a description of hell and that "by itself the passage cannot be taken as evidence of the persecution of the Muslims".[6]

Now, in saying that the Qur'ânic evidence suggests that the persecution of the Muslims was mild and that the chief feature of the opposition was disputation and verbal criticisms Watt merely reiterates the theses of his predecessors, particularly of Margoliouth and Leo Caetani. That aspect of the orientalists' views, as already indicated, would be taken up in the following chapter. Here it may once again be pointed out that Watt is not quite right in saying that *futinû*, which he translates as "tried", did not imply "anything more than *kayd* together with family pressure". The word *fitnah* or *futinû* is a comprehensive expression meaning, among other things, all sorts of manoeouvres and attempts, including persecution and physical assaults, adopted by the unbelievers to make the converts to Islam recant and deviate from the new faith. Obviously those attempts of the unbelievers were not limited to

1. *Ibid.*, 123-133.
2. *Ibid.*, 123.
3. *Ibid.*, 133.
4. *Ibid.*
5. Ibid., 132. The passage runs as follows:

﴿ثمّ إن ربّك للّذين هاجروا من بعد ما فتنوا ثمّ جـٰهدوا وصبروا إنّ ربّك من بعدها لغفور رّحيم﴾ (١٦ : ١١٠)

6. *Ibid.*

what is called *kayd* and family pressure. Similarly the statement that *kayd* and *makr* were always "within the letter of the law" is misleading. This latter expression is a modern phrase which is often employed to justify or condone an act or conduct. The plain meanings of the terms are plotting, deceit, artful machinations, trickery and the like. These refer only to the manner in which an adverse act is performed, not to the nature of the act itself, far less to its severity or intensity. Deceit, trickery and artful machinations were as much "within the letter of the law" in the sphere of tribal conflicts and hostilities as they are in the domain of modern warfare and hostilities. But that fact does not determine the severity or inhumanity of the act commited. Neither an act which may be described as trickery or deceit is necessarily mild and not severe, nor is a measure which might be within the letter of the law always mild and not severe. Putting a man to death may be perfectly within the letter of the law; but none would suggest that it is a mild and slight measure. Indeed it is manifestly a misleading statement to say that because what the unbelievers did towards the Muslims was according to the pagan law and customs, it was not severe and did not constitute "oppression".

Nor is the statement correct that the Qur'ân simply speaks of *kayd* and *makr* without specifying the nature of the plots or of the acts they committed or planned to commit. Look for instance at the following passages:

(1) 59:8 — ﴿للفقراء المهـٰجرين الذين أخرجوا من ديـٰرهم وأموٰلهم...﴾

"For those indigent *muhâjirs* who were driven out of their homes and properties..."

(2) 16:41 — ﴿والذين هاجروا فى الله من بعد ما ظلموا...﴾

"And those who migrated for Allah's sake after what they had suffered of oppression..."

(3) 3:195 — ﴿... فالذين هاجروا وأخرجوا من ديـٰرهم وأوذوا فى سبيلى...﴾

"... So those who migrated and were driven out of their homes and were persecuted in My cause..."

(4) 8:30 — ﴿وإذ يمكر بك الذين كفروا ليثبتوك أو يقتلوك أو يخرجوك...﴾

"And remember (O Prophet) how the unbelievers plotted against you, to incarcerate you, or to assassinate you or to deport you..."

(5) 22:39-40 —

﴿أذن للذين يقـٰتلون بأنهم ظلموا... الذين أخرجوا من ديـٰرهم بغير حق إلآ أن يقولوا ربنا الله...﴾

"Permission is given to those who are being fought with (to fight back), because they have been wronged... those who have been driven out of their homes without a

just cause except that they say: 'Our Lord is Allah...'"

It should be clear from the few passages quoted above, to none of which Watt thinks it necessary to refer, that (a) the Muslims were driven out of their homes and properties; (b) that they were oppressed (*ẓulimû*) and persecuted (*'ûdhû*) and (c) that the unbelievers conspired to arrest and keep the Prophet confined or to assassinate him or to deport him. It is presumably to this conspiracy that Watt indirectly refers by saying that the *kayd* and *makr*, though potentially disastrous, did not contravene the recognized norm and customs of the pagans. Of course their planned assassination of the Prophet, if carried out, would have been disastrous; but the failure of that plot does not mean that the Qur'ânic evidence only indicated mild opposition and family pressure upon the Muslims and not "oppression" as such. Indeed what Watt states or suggests to be the purport of the Qur'ânic evidence is roundly contradicted by the Qur'ân itself. Thus while he suggests that the Qur'ân does not specify the acts of oppression and violence upon the Muslims, the Qur'ân very clearly says that they were oppressed, "persecuted" and even driven out of their homes and properties. Watt says that what the unbelievers did towards the Muslims was in accordance with the laws and customs of the pagan Arabs. The Qur'ân categorically characterizes their conduct as "oppression" and injustice (*ẓulm*) and without any justification (*bi ghayr ḥaqq*). It is well worth pointing out here that *ẓulm* according to the prevailing Arab notion was that which was beyond the pale of recognized law and custom. Watt says that what was inflicted upon the Muslims was mild and slight. The Qur'ân shows that the persecution and oppression upon the Muslims, which included driving them out of their homes and properties, obliged them to become refugees seeking shelter in another place. It hardly needs elaborating that the persecution and oppression thus inflicted on them were severe and inhuman; for neither could the act of driving out one of one's home and property be designated a mild act of opposition, nor could it be suggested that the Muslims were obliged to seek shelter elsewhere simply because they were faced with mild opposition and petty annoyances!

With reference to the passage 85:1-7 Watt says that it "might reflect persecution at Mecca", but Western scholars are inclined to regard it as a description of hell and that "by itself the passage cannot be taken as evidence of the perrsecution of the Muslims".[1]

1. *Ibid.*, 132.

Yes, the passage in question reflects persecution at Makka. This is not the only Qur'ânic passage of this sort. There are a number of other passages which refer to the oppressions perpetrated by the previous peoples upon their respective Prophets and believers and to the consequences that befell those unbelieving people. These passages are intended to warn the Makkan unbelievers and encourage the Prophet and his followers to persevere in the mission and faith.[1] As regards the statement that Western scholars are inclined to regard the passage as a description of hell, Watt does not identify any of them. If anyone regarded the passage as a description of hell, he would be sadly mistaken; for whoever might have been the "people of the trench" (*'aṣḥâb al-'ukhdûd*) referred to in the passage, it clearly speaks of a group of believers being persecuted in fire while their persecutors, the unbelievers, were looking on and enjoying the sight. By no stretch of the imagination could the Qur'ân ever describe a scene wherein the *believers* are being punished in hell and the *unbelievers* looking on and enjoying it! Such a supposition is grotesquely contrary to the spirit not only of the Qur'ân but of any religious scripture inculcating a belief in final judgement and life in the hereafter.

As regards the statement that by itself the passage cannot be taken as evidence of the persecution of the Muslim it may be asked: Why should this passage alone, or why should the Qur'ânic evidence alone, be taken "by itself" to identify the details and nature of the Makkan opposition, notwithstanding the fact that Watt himself recongnizes that the Qur'ân does not give "detailed descriptions" of the activities of the Prophet's opponents and that the traditional accounts are a necessary and in some respects indispensable supplementary source of information?[2] The fact is that Watt here, as in many other places, considers the information of the traditional accounts in isolation and belittles it; then he takes up the Qur'ânic evidence in isolation and belittles it. His method has the appearance of taking both the types of evidence into account; but in reality it avoids the very essential work of collating and coordinating the two types of evidence. If this was done, and without any attempt to minimize the implication of either, a totally different picture of the Makkan opposition would have emerged. It would have then been clear that the unbelievers, in the course of their persecution of the Muslims, inhumanly tortured to death a number of believers, exposed a number of others in the mid-day desert sun, putting heavy and hot stones on their

1. See for instance Q. 2:214 and 28:4.

2. *Ibid.*, 131. See also his "The reliability of Ibn Isḥâq's sources" in *La Vie Du Prophète Mahomet Colloque de Strasbourg*, October, 1980, pp.31-43.

breasts, putting some of them, bare-bodied with hands and feet tightly bound, on burning charcoals, severly beating and torturing persons of high families, capturing and keeping them confined without food and water for days together, disowning and expelling dozens of others from their families and clans, excommunicating, boycotting and economically blockading a whole clan for the sole purpose of obtaining the person of the Prophet whom the unbelievers openly resolved to kill, and even plotting to kill him surreptitiously, etc. If one is not too apologetic for the unbelievers one would not fail to recognize that such acts of violence and hostility, even if "always within the letter of the law" of the Quraysh, were extremely oppressive acts and were by no means "mild" or "slight" persecution as Watt would have us believe.

(B) WATT ON THE PRESSURE UPON BANÛ HÂSHIM

As one of the manoeuvres of the opposition Watt discusses in a separate sub-section the pressure on Banû Hâshim.[1] He says that the Quraysh leaders headed by 'Abû Jahl appealed more than once to 'Abû Ṭâlib either to stop his nephew "proclaiming his new religion or else to withdraw his protection from him"; but 'Abû Ṭâlib refused to do either.[2] Watt does not emphasize in this connection nor in connection with his treatment of the boycott of Banû Hâshim[3] that the Quraysh leaders' sole purpose in both the cases was to obtain the person of the Prophet in order to put him to death and thereby cause the death of his mission. Definitely they did not want Banû Hâshim to withdraw their protection from the Prophet for the purpose of persecuting him "mildly" or "slightly" so that he would abandon his mission!

Watt further says that the attitude of 'Abû Ṭâlib and of Banû Hâshim in general was determined, besides the question of the honour of the clan, by "a question of economic policy". For, argues Watt, the Prophet's movement, "though primarily religious, impinged upon economic matters, and in this respect" it constituted a continuation of the "attitude of the Ḥilf al-Fuḍûl of opposition to unscrupulous monopolists" and of "the traditional policy of Banû Hâshim".[4] Even the boycott of Banû Hâshim, states Watt, was a stage "in the aggrandizement of Makhzûm and their associated clans at the

1. Watt, *M. at M.*, 119-122.
2. *Ibid.*, 119-120.
3. *Ibid.*, 120-122.
4. *Ibid.*, 120.

expense of the Ḥilf al-Fuḍûl".[1]

To substantiate this piece of his economic or materialistic interpretation Watt cites a few facts that really prove to the contrary and show how he cites facts in a sense quite opposite to their clear and direct implication. Thus, in support of the theory of Banû Hâshim's continuing the policy of the *Ḥilf al-Fuḍûl* Watt says that when 'Abû Ṭâlib offered protection for his sister's son 'Abû Salamah ibn 'Abd al-Asad of Banû Makhzûm, 'Abû Lahab also supported the action.[2] Having said this Watt immediatedly adds that the case of 'Abû Lahab is "interesting", since he "yielded" to the pressure of the opposition and sided with his wife's clan, 'Abd Shams, because of "his business relations" with them.[3]

Now, the case of 'Abû Lahab is not really "interesting". What is interesting is the use made of him by Watt to support his view. Earlier in his work he cites 'Abû Lahab's case as an instance of the growth of "individualism".[4] Now he states that 'Abû Lahab "yielded" to the pressure of the opposition and that he sided with his wife's clan because of his "business relations" with them. If 'Abû Lahab's policy was guided from the beginning by his supposed "individualism" and his business relations with Banû 'Abd Shams, there is no need to suggest that he "yielded" to the pressure of the opposition. In fact 'Abû Lahab started opposing the Prophet from the very start of his mission and without any pressure having been brought to bear on him. But even if we put the best construction on Watt's statements and accept the suggestion that 'Abû Lahab's attitude was guided by both business considerations and pressure of the opposition, it appears very "interesting" that Watt at the same time suggests that 'Abû Lahab supported 'Abû Ṭâlib's stand regarding 'Abû Salamah because he ('Abû Lahab) approved of the policy of Banû Hâshim's continuing the policy of opposition to unscrupulous monopolists. If 'Abû Ṭâlib's attitude in protecting the Prophet and 'Abû Salamah was at all guided by the alleged economic reason of continuing the policy of the *Ḥilf al-Fuḍûl*, and if 'Abû Lahab thought at all that the Prophet's movement and 'Abû Ṭâlib's policy were in line with the traditional policy of the *Ḥilf al-Fuḍûl* he would have supported that policy from

1. *Ibid.*, 121.
2. *Ibid.*, 120.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Supra*, p.109. See also Watt *M. at. M*, 18-19.

the very start instead of doing so at a much later stage in connection with the affair of 'Abû Salamah and that also only momentarily. The fact is that 'Abû Lahab's support for 'Abû Ṭâlib's stand in connection with 'Abû Salamah was due to considerations other than the question of the alleged continuatin of the policy of the *Ḥilf al-Fuḍûl*. It is worth pointing out here that Banû 'Abd Shams itself was formerly a prominent member of the *Ḥilf al-Fuḍûl* but, according to Watt himself, it had now come to have "very close business relations with Makhzûm" because "common interests" rather than "traditional alliances" moulded its policy.[1] That being the case, the question arises, why Banû Hâshim alone, and 'Abû Lahab himself, should now be particularly interested in continuing the policy of the *Ḥilf*? Watt does not, however, ask himself the question, let alone answer it.

Similarly, in connection with the boycott which is stated to be "a stage in the aggrandizement of Makhzûm" Watt refers to the poem which 'Abû Ṭâlib is said to have composed on the occasion and in which he reproaches a number of persons, "all members of clans in the Ḥilf al-Fuḍûl", for their supporting the old enemy — Banû Sahm, Banû Jumaḥ and Banû Makhzûm.[2] Watt further points out that those who took the lead in breaking the boycott such as Hishâm ibn 'Amr of Banû 'Âmir, Al-Muṭ'im ibn 'Abdiyy of Banû Asad, did so because with the passage of time they realized that the grand alliance and the boycott were strengthening the monopolistic controls of the strong clans.[3]

These facts, far from substantiating Watt's theory, only emphasize the question raised above. For, apart from the question of doubtful authenticity of 'Abû Ṭâlib's reputed poem, even if it is taken to reflect the actual state of affairs, it shows that the leaders mentioned in the poem, *all* of whom were members of clans formerly in the *Ḥilf*, did not consider 'Abû Ṭâlib's policy or the Prophet's movement a continuation of the policy of the *Ḥilf* or in defence of it. It is also not very convincing to say that those who took the lead in breaking the boycott only realized with the passage of time that it was aimed at the aggrandizement of Banû Makhzûm at the cost of the clans of the *Ḥilf al-Fuḍûl*. After all, whatever might have been the attitude of those Quraysh leaders towards the Prophet, they were shrewd businessmen

1. Watt, *op.cit.*, 122.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*

and would not have failed to see through the manoeuvre of Makhzûm from the very beginning. Then, how could the boycott be establishing the monopolistic controls of clans outside the *Ḥilf* only while the boycott was directed not against all the clans of the *Ḥilf* but only against Banû Hâshim (with Banû al-Muṭṭalib)? It is also not quite correct that all the leaders of the boycott breaking movement were from the clans of the *Ḥilf al-Fuḍûl*. In fact Zuhayr ibn 'Abî 'Umayyah of Banû Makzûm led the opposition in the assembly of the Quraysh where the boycott ending resolution was taken. Watt seems to have studiously omitted mentioning him in this connection. Thus the theory that the pressure on Banû Hâshim, more particulary the boycott, was a stage in the aggrandizement of Banû Makhzûm at the cost of the clans of the *Ḥilf al-Fuḍûl* and conversely that 'Abû Ṭâlib supported the Prophet because his movement was a continuation of the policy of opposition to unscrupulous monopolists initiated by the *Ḥilf al-Fuḍûl* does not stand reason, nor is it sustained by the facts adduced by Watt in its support.

CHAPTER XXXIII
THE UNBELIEVERS' OBJECTIONS *VIS-À-VIS* THE ORIENTALISTS

I. SIMILARITY OF THE VIEWS OF THE UNBELIEVERS AND THE ORIENTALISTS

As indicated in the last chapter, since the beginning of the twentieth century the orientalists appear to have paid special attention to the Qur'ânic evidence pertaining to the Makkan unbelievers' objections to the Prophet and his mission. In doing so they aim at two things. They stress that the history of the Makkan opposition was mainly the story of a debate, that it chiefly consisted of verbal criticisms of the Prophet and his message and not so much of physical persecution of the converts. Secondly, the orientalists attempt to justify, directly or indirectly, the unbelievers' objections thus raised.

That the Makkan persecution of the converts was not "mild" or "slight" has been shown in the previous chapter. The present chapter deals with the views of the orientalists regarding the various objections raised by the unbelievers. These objections related to many important topics like prophethood, revelation, resurrection, *qadr*, miracles and the like. Obviously it is not feasible to make a detailed discussion on all these topics in a single chapter. The present chapter would therefore be confined to noticing the orientalists' remarks about the principal items of objections and to showing how those remarks are either misconceived or inappropriate. Before proceeding to do so, however, it would be worthwhile to note that the views and assumptions of the orientalists as a whole are very much similar to the objections raised by the unbelievers.

The pith of the Makkan unbelievers' objctions was that Muḥammad (ﷺ) was no Prophet or Messenger of God. The orientalists endeavour to bring home the same thing, directly or indirectly. The unbelievers held that Muḥammad (ﷺ) did not receive any revelation or communication from God but was prompted by a devil or *jinn* or by some supernatural being. The orientalists similarly attempt to prove that the Prophet, though he sincerely believed that what he gave out was from God, it was really something which was prompted to him by others or grew out of his mind and reflection — an

"intellectual" or "imaginary" locution. Indeed the orientalists' recognition of sincerity on the Prophet's part is related to this view of theirs about revelation. The unbelievers alleged that the Prophet had turned mad or was a poet. Many of the orientalists, though they do not attribute madness to the Prophet, say that he suffered from some sort of ailment, an epilepsy or fainting disease. They also generally think that he was a sort of a poet and the Qur'ân is in the nature of a poetical composition. The unbelievers alleged that what the Prophet gave out was "tales of the ancients"; the orientalists hold that the Prophet drew heavily on the Jewish and Christian scriptures and beliefs. The unbelievers alleged that the Prophet was tutored by some persons; the orientalists hold more or less the same notion and say that, even if he had no particular tutor, he had learnt a good deal from the Jews and Christians, particularly from persons like Waraqah ibn Nawfal. The unbelievers thought that the Prophet aimed at personal aggrandizement and leadership; the orientalists similarly attempt to prove his ambition and preparation for the role he played. One of the accusations of the unbelievers was that the Prophet was breaking families and seducing children from their parents; the orientalists, particularly Watt, adopt and support the same accusation. Another objection of the unbelievers was that Muḥammad (ﷺ) was a person not important enough to be chosen by God as His Messenger. The orientalists, taking their cue from the Qur'ânic reference to this objection, attempt to show that the Prophet did not really belong to a noble and high family as the sources give him out to be; and that his family, even if once important in Makkan affairs, had gone down in the world when he emerged on the scene. One of the Quraysh leaders specifically stated that he viewed tha Prophet's mission as only a stage in the age-old rivalry for prominence and leadership between his (the leader's) clan and Banû Hâshim. The orientalists adopt more or less the same view. Particularly Watt's grandiloquent "materialistic" interpretation and his theory that the rise of Islam has to be viewed in the light of the age-old rivalry for influence and affluence between two groups of Quraysh clans, appear to be an adaptation and elaboration of the Quraysh leader's point of view.

It is thus not at all unnatural that in general the orientalists would try to justify and endorse the objections raised by the unbelievers. This is particularly so in the cases of Margoliouth and Watt whose main remarks in this respect are discussed in the following two sections.

II. ON MARGOLIOUTH'S REMARKS

According to Margoliouth the objections "recorded and ostensibly answered" in the Qur'ân were directed "against every part and feature of the new system; against the Prophet personally, against his notion of prophecy, against his style, his statements, his doctrines".[1] He further states that though much of the Qur'ân is not "polemical, but homiletic or narrative",[2] it is certain that at an early period "it circulated in writing" in answer to an objection or objections.[3] In this connection Margoliouth observes, somewhat inconsistently, that the Prophet was "indeed a powerful preacher" but "apparently not a ready debater, and was worsted when he tried his plan." Margoliouth further alleges that the Prophet was "apt to give violent and insulting answers to questions"; so he "received divine instructions not to take part in open debate, and if addressed and questioned by unbelievers, to evade the question and retire."[4]

In support of his statement that the Prophet was "apt to give violent and insulting answers to questions" Margoliouth cites Al-Ṭabarî's *tafsîr*, XXIII, 19. A reference to the work shows that the commentary here relates to a description of the state of those who would be in paradise. Particularly it is an explanation of the expression ﴿إن أصحـٰب الجنّة اليوم فى شغل فـٰكهون﴾ (36:55) and the discussion revoles round the meaning of the phrase *fî shughulin fâkihûn* ﴿فى شغل فـٰكهون﴾. Whatever night be the meaning of that expression it by no means relates to the Prophet's nature as a debater or to his alleged aptness to give violent and insulting replies to questions put to him. Margoliouth's citing this reference to support his statement is absolutely incorrect and grievously misleading.

And since his above mentioned remark is unwarranted, the other remark based on it, namely, that on account of that alleged aptness on his part to give violent replies, the Prophet received divine instructions to avoid taking part in open debate, etc, is also a misstatement and an unwarranted assertion. Margoliouth of course cites *'âyah* 6:67 (actually 6:68) in support of the alleged divine instruction. It runs as follows:

﴿وإذ رأيت الّذين يخوضون فى ءايـٰتنا فاعرض عنهم حتّىٰ يخوضوا فى حديث غيره...﴾

1. Margoliouth, *op.cit,* 130.
2. *Ibid.,* 145.
3. *Ibid.,* 128.
4. *Ibid.,* 127.

"And when you see those who engage in (ridiculing) Our signs, turn away from them until they take up a different discussion....." (6:68)

Obviously it is an instruction to the Prophet to avoid those who reviled and ridiculed the revelation.[1] It might even be taken to mean that the Prophet was asked not to engage in disputations with those people. But neither this *'âyah* nor anything else in the Qur'ân suggests that the instruction was given because he was apt to use "violent and insulting" language in debates, as Margoliouth alleges. In fact the emphasis of the *'âyah* is on the uselessness of engaging in verbal discussions with those who were bent upon merely ridiculing and defying the revelation; for no fruitful purpose could be served unless the discussion was conducted in a spirit of understanding and enquiry.

That this is the purport of the instruction is made clear in the passage 4:140 which obviously refers to the one cited above and is in the nature of an explanation of it. The passage runs as foollows:

﴿وقد نزّل عليكم فى الكتـب أن إذا سمعتم ءايـت الله يكفر بها ويستهزأ بها فلا تقعدوا معهم حتّى يخوضوا فى حديث غيره... ﴾ (٤ : ١٤٠)

"And He has sent down on you in the book that when you hear Our signs being defied and ridiculed, do not sit with them until they pursue a different discussion..." (4:140)

The instruction here is as much for the Prophet as for the believers in general.

Another allegation made by Margoliouth is that the Prophet "followed the examples of the New Testament Prophets in threatening that a terrible day was at hand" and related their stories, for "in their persons" he overcame the objections of his opponents.[2] The Makkans according to Margoliouth, "though true to the rites of paganism, took a philosophical view of the order of events, and they justly ridiculed any threat of temporal punishment for disobeying a Prophet" and were of the view that "the moral conduct of mankind had nothing to do with it." Hence they "scornfully" asked the Prophet to bring down on them the punishments; but the Prophet "ingeniously declared that his presence in Meccah prevented the calamity; or the experience of Allah with other cities which had failed to be convinced by miracles was what prevented him from sending one by Mohammed."[3] Margoliouth also mentions the types of miracles the Makkans asked for and says that only on

1. See Al-Ṭabarî, *Tafsîr*, VII, 228; Ibn Kathîr, *Tafsîr*, III,272.
2. Margoliouth, *op.cit.*, 130-131.
3. *Ibid.*, 132.

one occasion the Prophet ventured on a prophecy, "that the famous declaration that though the Greeks had been defeated by the Persians in 'the nearest part of the earth', they would yet again be victorious." Margoliouth adds that the "guess was not an unnatural one to hazard."[1] He further says that many years had to elapse before the Prophet "could triumphantly meet the demand for a miracle: the battle of Badr". Before that he had only to make shifts with the Qur'ân. He said that if he had no miraculous power, he had "miraculous knowledge", for he described scenes of ancient history "at which he had not been present." And finally "when he had become perfect in his own peculiar style", he challenged anyone , with even the aid of jinn, "to compose so well."[2] The Quraysh, continues Margoliouth, took exception "to the miraculous character of both the matter and style of the Koran" and replied that the stories of "the Christian and Jewish books" which the Prophet related were taught him by people whom they even mentioned. Margoliouth further observes that "whether there was a mentor or not, probably the stories were not altogether new to the Meccans". Further, one of the Makkans, Al-Naḍr ibn al-Ḥârith, accepted the challenge, versified the tales of the Persian kings, and read out those "sûrahs" at "seances similar to those in which the Prophet published the Koran". The effect of Al-Naḍr's action, stresses Margoliouth, "must have been very damaging; for when the Prophet at the battle of Badr got the man in his power, he executed him at once, while he allowed the other prisoners to be ransomed."[3]

Thus Margoliouth levels four specific allegations against the Prophet in connection with the Makkans' argumentation with him. (a) He says that the Prophet threatened an imminent divine punishment but when challenged to bring down the punishment he avoided doing so by saying that his presence amidst the Makkans prevented God from sending down the punishment. (b) That the Prophet similarly avoided producing a miracle by saying that because many previous people had refused to be convinced by miracles this prevented Allah from "sending one by" him. (c) That before the battle of Badr the Prophet only made "shifts" with the Qur'ân saying that if he had "no miraculous power" he had miraculous knowledge; for he described

1. *Ibid.*, 133-134.
2. *Ibid.*, 134.
3. *Ibid.*, 135.

scenes of ancient history at which he had not been present; and when he became perfect in his style he challenged anyone to "compose so well". (d) That the Makkans objected to the miraculous nature of both the contents and style of the Qur'ân, saying that the Prophet related the stories of the Christian and Jewish books by being taught these by others. Also one of the Quraysh opponents, Al-Naḍr, so successfully versified the tales of the Persian kings that the Prophet, when he got hold of him at the battle of Badr, executed him though the other prisoners were allowed to be ransomed.

These allegations and observations are based on a series of misconceptions and misinterpretations of several Qur'ânic passages. Thus, with regard to the "terrible day at hand" against which Muḥammad (ﷺ) as well as the New Testament prophets warned has reference to the "Day of Judgement", not to any divine punishment befalling sinners in this world. Margoliouth simply mixes this up with the instances of divine punishment that befell some past generations on account of their persistent transgressions and of which mention is made in many a Qur'ânic passage. The Prophet did indeed recite these passages as also those relating to the "terrible day" in order to make the unbelievers mend their ways. The passages relating to the past generations of course implied that if the Makkans persisted in their disbelief and disobedience such a fate might befall them. But never did the Prophet suggest that he had *the power* to bring down the punishment on them, nor did he ever indicate that he would ask Allah to send down such punishment. The Makkan unbelievers misunderstood, as does Margoliouth, that the Prophet falsely threatened to bring punishment on them and therefore demanded him to do so. The Prophet was however not in such haste nor was he despaired of the generality of the Makkan people's ultimate acceptance of the truth. Hence even in the darkest hour of the Makkan period of his mission he did not invoke Allah to punish his people. If one goes carefully through the relevant Makkan passages one would see that the one and consistent reply given to the foolish demand of the unbelievers was that Allah had His Own plan and followed His Own timing in awarding punishment, and not the whims of the erring and un-understanding humanity. That Allah in His All-Pervasive knowledge knew that the generality of the Makkans were not past the capacity to reform and that the Prophet was right in his expectation of their ultimate conversion to the truth are amply illustrated by the fact that in the course of his life-time and within the span of a little more than a decade the Makkans not only accepted the truth but

became its ardent champions. The difference between them and Margoliouth is that while they saw the truth, recognized their past folly and made ample amends for it, he in effect adopts their unbelief and cites their foolish demand, which they themselves rejected and retracted, as an argument in support of the supposed falsity of Muḥammad's (ﷺ) claim to prophethood!

Margoliouth's gravest error in this connection lies in his statement that the Prophet, in order to avoid bringing down the threatened punishment, ingeniously advanced the plea that his presence among the Makkans prevented Allah from sending it down. Obviously Margoliouth's allusion is to 8:33, ﴿وما كان الله ليعذّبهم وأنت فيهم...﴾ "(And Allah was not going to punish them while you were amidst them...)". Margoliouth fails to notice that this *'âyah* was revealed at Madina after the battle of Badr. It was thus not at all addressed to the Makkan undelievers in reply to their foolish demand. It was specifically addressed to the Prophet and the Muslims, pointing out that the annihilation of the Makkan leaders at the battle of Badr was indeed an act of Allah, a miracle, but Allah had deferred it till that time because the Prophet had not yet migrated and had been working amongst them expecting their acceptance of the truth. But now that they had driven out the Prophet and the Muslims and had prevented the believers from repairing to the Holy Mosque (Ka'ba), presuming themselves to be its guardians, Allah had brought down the deserving punishment on the arrogant leaders. The whole passage runs as follows:

﴿وما كان الله ليعذّبهم وأنت فيهم وما كان الله معذّبهم وهم يستغفرون * وما لهم ألّا يعذّبهم الله وهم يصدّون عن المسجد الحرام وما كانوا أولياءه إن أولياؤه إلّا المتّقون ولكنّ أكثرهم لا يعلمون﴾ (٨:٣٣-٣٤)

"And Allah was not to punish them while you were amidst them; nor was Allah to punish them while they (could) seek forgiveness. But what plea have they (now) that Allah should not punish them, when they prevent (men) from the Holy Mosque, and they are not its guardians? Verily its guardians are none but the God-fearing; but most of them do not know."(8:33-34)

Thus, far from being a reply given to the foolish demand of the Makkan leaders, the passage is addressed to the Prophet and the Muslims emphasizing the miracle at Badr which Allah had wrought in their favour. It is *not an ingenious excuse* advanced by the Prophet to evade bringing down the punishment, as Margoliouth misleadingly suggests. It refers very clearly to the punishment which had already been inflicted on the arrogant Makkan leaders and which, incidentally, Margoliouth seems to recognize as a mir-

acle. The passage also emphasizes the fact that Allah has His Own plan and timing in punishing the sinners and that He does so in such a manner as saves the Prophets and the believers from the catastrophe.[1] Margoliouth should have realized that the Qur'ânic statement which he supposes to be an ingenious excuse on the Prophet's part could not logically be any excuse at all. For the stories of the previous Prophets as told in the Qur'ân make it unmistakably clear that while Allah annihilated the sinful peoples He invariably saved at the same time the Prophets and their followers who were from among those very people. And there was nothing to prevent Him from similarly saving the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) and his followers if He willed to punish the Makkan unbelievers. Similarly ill-conceived is Margoliouth's remark that the Prophet evaded producing any miracle by saying that Allah's experience with the former generations who had refused to be convinced by the "signs" prevented Him from sending one by him. In this connection Margoliouth further states that the Prophet, by believing and accepting the miraculous stories of the Bible and by repeating them in "perfectly good faith", exposed himself to the criticism of his own mission and of his not himself providing any miracle.[2] Margoliouth's allusion is clearly to 17:59 : "And it did not restrain Us from despatching the signs except that the former peoples disbelieved them...." ﴿وما منعنا أن نرسل بالأيـــت إلّا أن كذّب بها الأوّلون...﴾. Before proceeding to explain this *'âyah* it is necessary to recapitulate three facts. First, the Prophet did never claim for himself *any* miraculous power, nor did he ever call upon anyone to accept him as a Prophet because he could perform miracles. The Qur'ân, and therefore the Prophet stressed that it was not for any Prophet to work miracles except by Allah's leave and command.[3] Second, it was the unbelievers who, because of their peculiar notions about prophethood, demanded of the Prophet to come up not just with any miracle, but with certain very strange or even suicidal performances specified by them. These were of course not acceded to. Third, it is not a fact that Allah did not cause any miracle to happen at the hand of the Prophet. Not to speak of the reports concerning the various miracles that took place at the instance of the Prophet, the Qur'ân bears witness to the occurrence of a number of them. The battle of Badr was a miracle; so was the transient

1. See for instance Ibn Kathîr, *Tafsîr.*, III, 589-590.
2. Margoliouth, *op.cit.*, 132-133.
3. See for instance 13:38 and 40:78, both of which run as follows:

﴿...وما كان لرسول أن يأتي بـــاية إلّا بإذن الله...﴾

cleaving of the moon. The *isrâ'* and *mi'râj* were miracles; and the Qur'ân itself, by its own challenging assertion, is an abiding miracle which Allah bestowed on the Prophet.

Now, if the first fact mentioned above is kept in mind, it should be clear that there could be no question of the Prophet's avoiding the performance of any miracle; for he just did not claim any miraculous power for himself. And as he said that it was Allah who caused miracles to take place through the Prophets, he could not conceivably have stated that Allah would not or was incapable of causing *any* to happen through him. Nor is it true, as already indicated, that none did happen in his case. Margoliouth's innuendo and the Qur'ânic passage alluded to in this connection have in fact reference to the second point mentioned above. The reports concerning the revelation of the passage 17:59[1] show that the unbelievers, just like their demand for causing the threatened punishment to fall on them, asked the Prophet to call on Allah, if he was truly His messenger, to transform the mount Ṣafâ into a hill of gold, or to erase the hills and mountains of the land and transform it into smiling agricultural fields. In their haughtiness they even asked for a rain of stones to fall on them. The passage under reference is a reply to those foolish demands. It is noteworthy that the expression *bi al-'âyât* is in the definite form (being prefixed by the definite aticle *al*). It thus speaks about the specific miraculous performances which the unbelievers asked for. And just as their demand for punishment was rejected, so was this peculiar demand, and for similar reasons. Margoliouth interprets the *'âyah* as meaning that Allah declined to send down the miracles simply because the previous peoples, had refused to be convinced by them. The implication is not that. The implication is that their refusal to accept the truth even when their challenging demands were met meant that there would remain no alternative but to punish them, for inaction even after that would confirm the unbelievers' claim that neither prophethood nor the existence of Allah deserved any credence. Hence the inevitability of punishment under such a situation. By referring to the disbelief of former peoples in similar miracles the *'âyah* in fact implies the inevitability of punishment that befell those peoples and indicates that it was not Allah's plan that such should be the fate of the Makkans. It was no avoiding the performance of the miracles asked for; it was an avoiding of the sure ruin which the Makkan unbelievers foolishly and haughtily asked for.

1. See for instance Al-Ṭabarî, *Tafsîr*, XV, 107-109.

Indeed the reports state that on their asking for such miracles Allah had deputed the angel Jibrîl to ask the Prophet whether he desired that the miracles they demanded should be granted and they thus be driven to sure ruin or whether they should be given a respite and a chance to reform. The Prophet preferred the latter.[1] As in the case of their demand for bringing down the punishnent on them, so in respect of their demand for the specific miracles, the same considerations prevented their being carried out. And subsequent events only proved the correctness of Allah's plan and the Prophet's expectations.

The third of Margoliouth's allegations is that before the battle of Badr the Prophet had only made "shifts" with the Qur'ân saying that if he had no miraculous power he had "miraculous knowledge", for he described scenes of ancient history at which he had not been present; and when he became perfect in his style he challenged anyone to "compose so well". From this statement Margoliouth seems to recognize that the battle of Badr was a miracle. He also seems to recognize that the prophecy about the victory of the Romans, despite their crushing defeat, over the Persians, was in the nature of a miracle, though he attempts to belittle it. The prophecy is indeed an evidence of the miraculous nature of the Qur'ân; but the Prophet did not claim it to be a miracle performed by him. Nor did he claim the battle of Badr to be his own miracle; it was cited only as an instance of Allah's miraculous help for the handful of Muslims against an overwhelming host. Nor is it correct that till the battle of Badr the Prophet only made "shifts" with the Qur'ân, especially by claiming "miraculous knowledge" of past events at which he had not been present. The allusion is clearly to such passages of the Qur'ân as 12:102, 28:44 and 3:44. These passages relate to the stories about the previous Prophets. Of these passages the last mentioned definitely belongs to a post-Badr period. Be that as it may, the statement that when the Prophet thus perfected his style he threw out the challenge to anyone to "compose so well" is manifestly wrong. For the Qur'ânic challenge to anyone to come forward with any composition comparable to its text is not confined to those portions of the Qur'ân that were given out after the Prophet is alleged to have perfected his style. The challenge was made with reference to each and every part of the Qur'ân, both earlier and later revelations, and it remains open even now.

1. *Ibid.*

This brings us to the fourth item of Margoliouth's remarks, namely, that the Makkans objected to the miraculous nature of both the general character and style of the Qur'ân by saying that the Prophet was taught the ancient stories by some persons. Also that Al-Naḍr ibn al-Ḥârith successfully rivalled the Qur'ânic compositions by versifying the stories of the Persian kings so that the Prophet, when he got Al-Naḍr within his grasp, had him executed forthwith.

None of these statements of Margoliouth's is justifibale. It is not true that the Quraysh took exception "to the miraculous character of both the matter and style" of the Qur'ân. As regards the general character and style of the Qur'ân they always regarded it as *siḥr* or magic; but they obstinately asserted that the Prophet had been taught the ancient stories by some persons and also that the texts had been composed for him by others. These allegations of theirs were really marks of their bewilderment at the miraculous style of the Qur'ân and an acknowledgement that the Prophet himself was capable neither of producing such a style of text nor the facts contained therein. Hence the Qur'ân very aptly refuted their allegation by pointing out that the persons they alleged to be the Prophet's tutors or clerks were all the more incapable of producing such a text because they were not native speakers of the langauge itself. Margoliouth's remarks in this connection are somewhat confusing. He says that "whether there was a mentor or not, probably the stories were not altogether new to the Meccans" who heard them in the course of their trade journeys from the Jews and Christians.[1] Thus, while the Makkans themselves did not claim any knowledge of the Prophetic stories and thought that these were taught to the Prophet by someone else, Margoliouth assumes that "the stories were not altogether new to the Meccans". Now, earlier in his work Margoliouth suggests, as noticed before,[2] that the Prophet acquired a knowledge of the Biblical stories from the Jews and Christians which he retold in the Qur'ân. And here Margoliouth would have us believe that the Quraysh criticised the Prophet because they had also heard the stories from the Jews and Christians. Of course, in a general sense, the Prophetic stories were not altogether something unheard of; but if the Quraysh had really found that the Qur'ânic narratives were the same as those they had already heard in the course of their

1. Margoliouth, *op.cit.*, 134.
2. See *supra*. pp. 254-255.

trade journeys, they would not have alleged that some person or persons had taught the Prophet those stories and would have rather dismissed him outright by saying that he had come out with nothing new.

Nor is it at all correct that Al-Naḍr ibn al-Ḥârith had successfully rivalled by his composition the style of the Qur'ân. He did indeed versify the stories of the Persian kings and recite them at gatherings to distract the people from listening to the Qur'ân; but there is no indication whatsoever in the sources that his efforts met with any amount of success. We do not hear of anyone falling away from Islam or even relapsing into skepticism about the Prophet on account of Al-Naḍr's exhibitions as we hear in connection with some other incidents like *isrâ'* and *mi'râj*. In fact had Al-Naḍr composed anything at all comparable to any part of the Qur'ân the Quraysh would have made a hill out of that mole and would have preserved and transmitted it as a continuing challenge to the Prophet's claim. After all, the Quraysh had remained at the helm of affairs at Makka for a considerable time even after the battle of Badr. And since the supposition that Al-Naḍr was a rival composer is totally baseless, the allegation made against the Prophet on that ground that he executed him because of the damaging effect of his composition is totally wrong and malicious. Nor was Al-Naḍr the only prisoner of the battle of Badr to be executed. He along with at least another prisoner were condemned to death for offences other than his alleged success as a rival composer.

Margoliouth makes a number of other allegations based on the Makkan unbelievers' objections. Thus with reference to their demand for the revelation of the whole Qur'ân in one instalment Margoliouth says that if it was "really copied from a 'well-guarded tablet', why could it not have been produced in a final edition once for all [sic]?"[1] He further says that the reason given by the Prophet for his not doing so was "his own personal comfort or convenience". Similarly, argues Margoliouth, Joseph Smith, founder of Mormonism, "having published his *Book of Mormons* as a volume, was compelled to supplement it from time to time with occasional revelations."[2]

Obviously Margoliouth's innuendo is that the Prophet avoided giving out the Qur'ân all at a time in order to avoid the inconvenience faced by Joseph

1. Margoliouth, *op.cit.*, 135-136.
2. *Ibid.*, 136.

Smith some one thousand years subsequently of revising the statements from time to time. Yet Margoliouth levels that very allegation against the Prophet on the very next page of his (Margoliouth's) work and says that the Prophet, after having allegedly made incorrect or imprudent statements, revised them by producing amended or fresh revelations.[1] The fact is that neither did the Prophet bring revelations in instalments for his own comfort or personal convenience, nor for avoiding the need for revisions and corrections; nor did he make such corrections or revisions in the revelations.

Margoliouth's innuendo about the Prophet's personal convenience has allusion to the Qur'ânic passage 25:32 which runs as follows:

﴿وقال الذين كفروا لولا نزّل عليه القرءان جملة واحدة كذلك لنثبّت به فؤادك ورتّلنـه ترتيلا﴾ (٢٥:٣٢ الفرقان)

"The unbelievers say: Why is not the Qur'ân sent down on him all at once?' Thus (is it), in order that We may affix therewith your heart; and We do reveal it gradually". (25:32)

The *'âyah* furnishes two important reasons for the gradual revelation of the Qur'ân. In the first place it says that it was so revealed because Allah intended thereby to affix therewith or to strengthen thereby "your heart". The pharse 'your heart' refers to the Prophet as well as to the Muslims. The significance of the *'âyah* is that Allah's intention was to habituate the Muslims gradually to the teachings and beneficial reforms of the Qur'ân.[2] Indeed each passage was revealed on the most appropriate occasion and situation so that the meaning and implications were affixed in the minds of the early Muslims in the context of practical situations and that subsequent Muslims would get the appropriate light and guidance when faced with similar situations and questions. The *'âyah* also means that the Qur'ân was so revealed in stages that the text is affixed in the Prophet's heart so he would not forget it and that similarly he would recite the text, as revealed, to the early Muslims to enable them gradually to get it by heart. This reason for the gradual revelation of the Qur'ân is explained in two other passages, 17:106 and 87:6, which run respectively as follows:

﴿وقرءانا فرقنـه لتقرأه على النّاس على مكث ونزّلنـه تنزيلا﴾ (١٧:١٠٦)

"And a Qur'ân which We have divided (into parts) in order that you recite it unto

1. *Ibid.*, 137,139.
2. See Ibn Kathîr, *Tafsîr*, VI, 118.

men at intervals; and We have sent it down in istalments". (17:106)

﴿ سنقرئك فلا تنسىٰ ﴾ (٨٧ : ٦)

And, "We shall have it read unto you; so you shall not forget (it)". (87:6)

The second and more fundamental reason given in the *'âyah* 25:32 (as well as in 17:106) is that it is Allah Who thus sent the revelations to the Prophet in instalments and by stages,[1] so that there was no question of his himself producing it all at once. Indeed the objection which the unbelievers made of his not producing the entire Qur'ân at a time and which Margoliouth reiterates constitutes the most effective argument in favour of the Prophet's not having himself composed the text of the Qur'ân. For, if it was his composition he could have come up with the whole or a substantial part of it at a time, instead of giving out mostly short passages, particularly as Margoliouth himself alleges that the Prophet made elaborate and calculated plans to play the role he did and appeared on the scene when his plans matured! The instance of Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism, which Margoliouth cites, also proves this; for, as he planned to play the role of a Prophet he came up with a complete book composed and prepared beforehand. He did so obviously because he must have been aware, like Margoliouth, of the type of objections raised by the Makkan unbelievers against Muḥammad (ﷺ)!

And a third reason is given in the *'âyah* that immediately follows, namely, 25:33, which states: "And they cannot come to you with a question except that We bring to you the truth and the best explanation" ﴿ولا يأتونك بمثل إلا جئنـك بالحقّ وأحسن تفسيرا﴾. Thus one of the reasons for sending the revelations to the Prophet gradually was to provide the truth and the best explanation about the questions and objections the unbelievers raised from time to time, and not all at once. And even with regard to this particular objection about the Qur'ân's not being revealed all at once the unbelievers were advancing only a lame excuse for their unbelief; for along with making this objection they also made the absurd demand that each of them should be given a separately written scripture![2] As one scholar very aptly points out, one of the most distinctive features of the Qur'ân is that it "not only contains answers to all objections against it, but also adduces arguments of the truth of the assertions made. No other religious book of the world satisfies this require-

1. ﴿ورتلنـه ترتيلا﴾ and ﴿ونزلنـه تنزيلا﴾

2. See Q. 74:52.

ment, which circumstance alone places the Qur'ân above all scriptures..."[1]

Margoliouth makes other allegations too. Thus with reference to the incident of the Makkan leaders' sending two of their envoys to Madina to get the opinion of the Jews of that place about the Prophet Margoliouth says that since the questions that were suggested to the Quraysh to be put to the Prophet "concernd the Seven Sleepers and Alexander the Great, we may be sure that they were not suggested by the Jews."[2] Earlier he suggests that the story is "an anachronism", for the Prophet "began to quarrel with the Jews" after the migration to Madina. Before it, says Margoliouth, he used to appeal to them as a final authority and they also were on his side because, seeing the "danger of all Arabia becoming Christian" they even "deemed it sagacious to encourage a non-Christian teacher."[3] Margoliouth further alleges that as regards the reply about the Seven Sleepers the Prophet made a mistake about their number but "in a later edition of the surah" it was said that there were various opinions on the subject and that Allah knows best. Similarly, further writes Margoliouth, the Prophet, after having stated that "what is worshipped will be punished as well as the worshipper", brought a "fresh revelation" to make the necessary exception about Jesus."[4]

Now, it is true that disputes with the Jews developed after the migration; but that does not mean that the latter were on the Prophet's side during the Quraysh leaders' argumentation with him. The statement that the Jews even encouraged the Prophet to preach his teachings in view of the near-success of Christianity in Arabia is a pure surmise and is not borne out by the facts. Also the statement that the nature of the questions suggested to the Quraysh, namely, about the Seven Sleepers and Alexander the Great, precludes the prompters being Jews is not at all convincing. Margoliouth himself does not mention any reason why the Jews should have been shy of agitating those subjects. In any case, his allegation that the Prophet first gave one reply about the number of the sleepers and subsequently modified it in a "later edition of the surah", while "adhering to the number which he had originally given" is totally wrong. In fact Margoliouth makes here three misstatements,

1. Muhammad Ali, *The Holy Qur'an Arabic text, English translation and commentary*, seventh edition, Lahore, 1985, pp.702-703, n.1785.

2. Margoliouth, *op.cit.* 136-137.

3. *Ibid.*, 129.

4. *Ibid.*, 137.

namely, (a) that the Prophet originally gave a specific number; (b) that he subsequently modified it in a revised edition of the *sûrah*; and (c) that while revising he adhered to the original number, yet saying that Allah knows best. Each and everyone of these three assertions is untrue. The only *'âyah* of the *sûrah* which speaks about the number of the sleepers is 18:22. No specific number is given by the Prophet in it. It speaks only of the various opinions about it. There is no indication in the sources that this *'âyah* replaces an earlier *'âyah*. So there is no question of its being a revision or modification of an earlier statement. Similarly no adhering to the original number supposedly given earlier while emphasizing that Allah knows best about their number. Now, look at the *'âyah* which runs as follows:

﴿ سيقولون ثلثة رّابعهم كلبهم ويقولون خمسة سادسهم كلبهم رجما بالغيب ويقولون سبعة وثامنهم كلبهم قل رّبى أعلم بعدّتهم . . . ﴾

"Some would say they were three, the fourth of them was their dog; others say they were five, the sixth of them was their dog — guessing at the unknown — (yet) others say they were seven, their eighth was their dog. Say: My Lord knows best their number..." (18:22)

As regards Margoliouth's other statement relating to Jesus, it has reference to the Quraysh leaders' argumentation with the Prophet which is recorded by Ibn Isḥâq and the commentators.[1] It is related that on one occasion the Prophet, in the course of his discussion with a group of Quraysh leaders, recited unto them the *'âyah* 21:98 which says: "You and what you worship besides Allah shall be fuel for the hell-fire; you shall indeed come to that."[2] At this they were perturbed. Shortly afterwards another of their leaders, 'Abd Allah ibn al-Zaba'râ (al-Sahmî) came to them and told them to discomfit the Prophet by asking him whether, in that case, 'Uzayr and Jesus (peace be on them) whom the Jews and the Christians respectively worshipped would also be in hell. The Quraysh leaders much relished this suggestion and posed it to the Prophet. It is reported that in reply to this question of the unbelievers the *'âyahs* 21:101-103 were revealed which say in effect that those on whom Allah's favours had previously been bestowed would of course be far away from hell.[3] The passage is neither a modification of nor an "exception" made to what is wrongly supposed to be a

1. Ibn Hishâm, I, 358-360; Al-Ṭabarî, *Tafsîr*, XVII,76-77; Ibn Kathîr, *Tafsîr*, V, 374-376.
2. The text runs as follows: ﴿ إنّكم وما تعبدون من دون الله حصب جهنّم أنتم لها وٰردون ﴾
3. The text runs as follows: ﴿ إن الّذين سبقت لهم مّنّا الحسنىٰ أولـٰئك عنها مبعدون ﴾

general and careless statement made in 21:98. The passage is in reality a pointer to the folly and mistake of the unbelievers themselves. As Ibn Kathîr points out, the *'âyah* 21:98 was addressed to the Makkan unbelievers and it spoke about them and what *they* worshipped. It did thus in no way refer to what the Jews and the Christians worshipped. Nor could Jesus and 'Uzayr (peace be on them), who themselves did neither exhort nor relish their being worshipped, be held accountable for what the others did towards them.[1] A second mistake on the part of the Quraysh leaders and those who adopt their view has been pointed out by Al-Ṭabarî. It is that the pronoun *mâ* (ما what) used in the expression *mâ ta'budûna* (ما تعبدون) relates only to inanimate objects with the clear implication that the idols that the Makkans worshipped were meant. If Jesus, 'Uzayr or others were meant, the pronoun *man* (من = whom) would have been used instead.[2] The folly and mistake of the Makkans are also pointed out by the Qur'ân itself in 43:58 which runs as follows:

﴿ وقالوا ءأ لهتنا خير أم هو ما ضربوه لك إلّا جدلا بل هم قوم خصمون ﴾

"And they say: 'Are our gods better or he (Jesus)?' They did not cite him to you except by way only of disputation; rather they are a contentious people".

Margoliouth next takes up the Makkan unbelievers' objection to the resurrection of the body in the hereafter and says that "there are some very obvious objections" against the doctrine. He also refers in this connection to their demand for bringing their dead ancestors back to life and characterizes as "sophism" the Qur'ânic reply that such resurrection was no more difficult for Allah than the original creation of man. Margoliouth adds that this reply "left the matter precisely where it was."[3]

Here again Margoliouth simply endorses the unbelievers' views. He does not mention any of what he calls the "obvious objections" against this doctrine of resurrection. He also does not note that the Prophet did never claim for himself the competence or miraculous power to bring back the dead to life. He, or rather the Qur'ân, always asserted that it is Allah Who would resurrect the dead for judgement, reward and punishment. The reply given to the unbelievers' objection was thus just to the point. It was no "sophism"; nor did it leave the matter where it was.

Continuing his remarks on the same theme Margoliouth further states that

1. Ibn Kathîr, *Tafsîr*, V, 376.
2. Al-Ṭabarî, *Tafsîr*, XVII, 77.
3. Margoliouth, *op.cit.*, 138-139.

the descriptions about the restoration of the body for reward and punishment were made not "without careless statements which gave rise to ribald criticisms; of which, if no other explanation was forthcoming", the Prophet would say "that the purpose had been to test the faith of the believers". Margoliouth further alleges that "if the imprudence committed had been too considerable the verse would be withdrawn" and the Prophet would say that to withdraw a revelation and substitute another for it was well within the power of Allah. "Doubtless it was", remarks Margoliouth, "but so obviously within the power of man that it is to us astonishing how so compromising a procedure can have been permitted to be introduced into the system by friends and foes."[1]

These remarks of Margoliouth's are based on a good deal of mixing up and twisting of the facts. Nowhere in the Qur'ân is the plea of testing "the faith of the believers" raised in extenuation of any careless statement regarding resurrection of the body and reward and punishment in the hereafter. If the allusion is to the *'âyah* 17:60 which has reference to *'isrâ'* and *mi'râj* then the remark is irrelevant in respect of both the essence of the incident as well as the text of the *'âyah* itself. The objection which the unbelievers are reported to have raised in this connection refers to the very fact of *'isrâ'* and *mi'râj* and not to resurrection, nor even to the scenes of paradise and hell which the Prophet is reported to have seen in the course of that miraculous event. More importantly, the *'âyah* says that the sight (*al-ru'yâ*) which the Prophet described is a *test* (fitnah) for men (*li al-nâs*) and not for the faithful, as Margoliouth states. If, on the other hand, the allusion is to 74:31, it is very clearly said there that the number mentioned is a test "for the unbelievers" and is on the contrary, intended to "increase the believers in their faith."[2] Similarly 21:111, which has reference to the unbelievers' impatiently asking for the threatened punishment to come on them, speaks of the respite given them as *fitnah* or test for them.[3] Indeed nowhere in the more than fifty places in the Qur'ân where the expression *fitnah* occurs in its various forms does it refer to any "careless" statement about the resurrection or hereafter; nor does it bear the sense of a test for the believers."[4] Margoliouth's remark

1. *Ibid.*, 139.
2. The text runs as follows: ﴿...ليستيقن الذين أوتوا الكتب ويزداد الذين ءامنوا إيمانا...﴾
3. See for instance, Al-Shawkânî, *Tafsîr*, III, 431.
4. See the expression in Fuwâd 'Abd al-Bâqî, *Al-Mu'jam al-Mufahras li-Alfâẓ al-Qur'ân al-Karîm*.

in this respect is absolutely unwarranted.

Similarly there is no instance in the Qur'ân where a "careless" or "imprudent" statement with regard to either the resurrection or any other theme was withdrawn and substituted by another revelation. His statement that the Prophet would say that to withdraw a revelation was well within the power of Allah obviously refers to 2:106.[1] Margoliouth thus brings in the question of *naskh* as contained in the Qur'ân to bear on his discussion on the argumentation of the Makkan unbelievers and alleges that the Prophet had recourse to this procedure of revising or replacing a "careless" statement by another. The doctrine of *naskh* is indeed an important and difficult subject;[2] and it is neither feasible nor necessary to discuss it here. Margoliouth's twisting will be clear if it is simply noted that the *'âyah* he alludes to was revealed at Madina and it has no relation to the Makkan (or even Madinan) unbelievers argumentation with the Prophet; nor has it reference to any "careless" or "imprudent" statement regarding resurrection and life in the hereafter.

Finally, Margoliouth refers to the Makkan unbelievers' plea that if everything happened according to God's will then they were not to be held responsible for worshipping other objects besides Him; for if He did not so wish they would not have done it. Margoliouth states that this question of "freewill and determinism" occasioned some difficulty for the Prophet who was "too little of a philosopher to perceive the rigidity of this consequence" or the contradictory nature of the propositions. Hence, remarks Margoliouth, the Prophet insisted that every event was "designed by God" and at the same time warned men "of the consequences which would follow according to the course which they took."[3]

Thus does Margoliouth bring in the question of *qadr*, *qaḍâ'* or *mashy'a* in connection with the Makkan unbelievers' objections. This specific plea of

1. The tex runs as: ﴿ما ننسخ من ءاية أو ننسها نأت بخير منها أو مثلها...﴾

2. For a discussion on the subject see, for instance, Ibn al-Jawzî (Jamâl al-Dîn 'Abû al-Farj 'Abd al-Raḥmân), *Nawâsikh al-Qur'ân*, etc. Muḥammad Ashraf 'Alî al-Malyabârî, Madina Islamic University, Madina, 1404/1984; Muḥammad Makkî ibn 'Abî Ṭâlib al-Qaysî ('Abû Muḥammad, d. 437), *Al-'Îḍâh Li-Nâsikh al-Qur'ân wa Mansûkhihi*, ed. Aḥmad Ḥasan Farhât, Imam Muḥammad ibn Sa'ûd Islamic University, Riyadh, 1396 H. See also Shâh Waliullah al-Dehlawî, *Al-Fawz al-Kabir Fî 'Uṣûl al-Tafsîr.*

3. Margoliouth, *op.cit.*, 140-141.

the unbelievers is alluded to in two Qur'ânic passages, 16:35 and 43:20 which run respectively as follows:

﴿ وقال الّذين أشركوا لو شاء الله ما عبدنا من دونه من شىء نّحن ولا ءاباؤنا ولا حرّمنا من دونه من شىء... ﴾

"The polytheists say: 'If Allah had not so willed, we would not have worshipped anything except Him; neither we nor our fathers. Nor would we have held anything prohibited as against Him..." (16:35)

﴿ وقالوا لو شاء الرّحمن ما عبدنـٰهم... ﴾

"And they (the polytheists) say: 'If the Most Merciful had so willed, we would not have worshipped them (the idols)..." (43:20)

In raising this plea the unbelievers did not at all intend to deny Divine will and to defend their "free-will". They just attempted to justify their idol worship saying that God must have been agreeable to their so doing, or else he would have caused some misfortune or punishment to befall them or their forefathers.[1] An appeal to the practice of their forefathers is also implicit in this plea of theirs, as is also the appeal to *qadr*. It is thus necessary to look at what the Qur'ân's reply was or is to this plea of the unbelievers. The reply is contained in the remainder of the two *'âyahs* mentioned above and in what immediately follows them. These run as follows:

﴿ ... كذ ٰلك فعل الّذين من قبلهم فهل على الرّسل إلا البلـٰغ المبين * ولقد بعثنا فى كل أمّة رّسولا أن اعبدوا الله واجتنبوا الطّـٰغوت فمنهم من هدى الله ومنهم من حقّت عليه الضّلـٰلة فسيروا فى الأرض فانظروا كيف كان عـٰقبة المكذّبين ﴾

"...Thus did act those before them. So is aught the duty of the Messengers (of Allah) except open preaching? And We indeed sent among every people a Messenger (with the behest): You all worship Allah and keep yourselves away from the false gods. Hence of them some Allah guided and on some of them misguidance prevailed. So travel through the earth and see what was the end of those who denied (the message)". (16:35-36)

﴿ ... مالهم بذ ٰلك من علم إن هم إلّا يخرصون * أم ءاتينـٰهم كتـٰبا مّن قبله فهم به مستمسكون * بل قالوا إنّا وجدنا ءاباءنا على أمّة وإنّا على ءاثـٰرهم مّهتدون * وكذ ٰلك ما أرسلنا من قبلك فى قرية مّن نّذير إلّا قال مترفوها إنّا وجدنا ءاباءنا على أمّة وإنّا على ءاثـٰرهم مّقتدون ﴾

"...They have no knowledge of that. They do naught but lie. Or have We given them a book before this so that they hold fast to it? Nay, they say: 'We found our fathers on a religion; and we are guided by their footsteps. Similarly, We did not send a warner to any habitation before you but that its leading ones said; 'Surely we found our fathers on a religion and verily we follow their footsteps'". (43:20-23).

1. Al-Ṭabarî, *Tafsîr*, XIV,103; XXV, 59. Ibn Kathîr, *Tafsîr*, IV, 488-489. VII, 210.

It should be clear from the above that the reply thus given immediately to the unbelievers stresses three things. First, they were speaking from ignorance and lack of understanding in raising the plea of divine will and dispensation in justification of their polytheism. This plea of theirs was a lie and a fabrication on their part. Second, the divine will and directive in this respect had been made clear through His messengers to previous peoples to whom the message had been delivered all too clearly and specifically, asking man to worship none but Allah. If men were pre-consigned to guidance or error, there was no point in sending revelations and Messengers to them. Third, it is the same old plea which the previous generations raised while turning away from the truth that they found their forefathers on the religion which they were adhering to. In short, the Qur'ân says that to raise the plea of divine will and dispensation in defence of polytheism is utter ignorance and a downright falsehood about Allah; for He has clearly communicated His directive in this respect through His numerous Messengers.

In so far as the concept of *qadr* as contained in the Qur'ân is concerned, it is not coterminous with fatalism or determinism. The rigidity and irreconcilibility with free-will which Magoliouth supposes the concept involves are the creation of subsequent philosophers. If we extricate ourselves from the pedantry of the philosophers, we would see that the concept of *qadr* is neither antitehtical to free-will nor does it reduce man to an automaton absolving him of all responsibility for his acts. It is aimed at reminding him of the inadequacy of his faculties and capabilities and of the need for his ultimate dependence upon Allah's grace and mercy in every deed and effort. After all man's faculties and capabilities, even his free-will or ability to form any will, are all Allah's gifts. When, therefore, the Qur'ân says that Allah gives guidance to whomsoever He wills and withholds it from whomsoever He wills, it only means that since Allah has already communicated to man what guidance is and what constitutes misguidance and error, he should exercise his free-will and faculties to please Allah and seek His grace in getting guidance and in avoiding evil. Indeed guidance is only for the God-fearing: "It (the revelation, Qur'ân) is guidance for the God-fearing ﴿... هدى للمتقين﴾[1]. "We have shown him (man) the way; whether he be grateful or ungrateful (rests with his will) ﴿إنا هدينه السّبيل إمّا شاكرا وإمّا كفورا﴾[2]. Divine

1. Q.2:2.
2. Q.76:3.

Will and Dispensation is thus rather a confirmation of man's free-will and individuality, than a negation of it. It is an incentive to effort and exertion combined with dependence on Allah and solicitation for His mercy and grace.

III. WATT AND THE UNBELIEVERS' OBJECTIONS

On his part Watt divides the Makkan unbelievers' objections into two categories — their "criticisms of the message" and "criticisms of Muḥammad's prophethood"[1]. In doing this, however, he deals with more or less the same items of objections as are mentioned by Margoliouth. In fact these divisions are also more or less those indicated by the latter.

Watt first refers to the unbelievers' criticism of the doctrine of resurrection, particlarly their objection to the restoration to life of the human body mouldered in grave. Watt quotes in this connection 37:13-17, in his own translation, and then remarks that the Makkans "described this restoring to life of mouldering bodies as magic".[2] In saying this Watt clearly misunderstands or misinterprets the passage he quotes. It does not bear out this sense at all. Its *'âyahs* 14-15 speak of the unbelievers' mocking at the revelation and of their characterizing it as magic, not of their characterizing the restoring to life of mouldering bodies as magic, which they had not obviously witnessed! The two *'âyahs* say: "And when they see a 'sign' they mock at it and say: 'This is but obvious magic'" [3]. The succeeding two *'âyahs*, 16-17, of the passage speak of their disbelief in resurrection. Watt has mistakenly related this disbelief with their remark about the 'sign', i.e., revelation, which they termed "magic" and which is mentioned in the two previous *'âyahs*.

Like Margoliouth Watt recognizes that the question of resurrection is connected with the doctrine of "the last Day and the resulting eternal reward and punishment". He further observes that the Makkans' rejection of this doctrine meant "that the sanction that was being introduced for the code of individual behaviour would remain ineffective".[4] This implication of their objection as noted here by Watt is correct; but it also means that one of their main reasons for their opposition to the Prophet was their unwillingness to

1. Watt, *M. at M.*, 127,131.
2. *Ibid.*, 124.
3. The two *'âyahs* run as follows: ﴿وإذا رأوا ءاية يستسخرون ۝ وقالوا إن هذا إلا سحر مبين﴾
4. Watt *M., at M.*, 124.

accept a code of conduct based on individual accountability, instead of the life of unbridled licence they had been accustomed to[1] and that therefore their opposition to what is called "the message" started right from the beginning of the Prophet's mission and not after the alleged affair of the satanic verses as Watt so laboriously and incorrectly suggests. For, as he here admits, the "teaching about the last Day was part of the primary message of the Qur'ân" and as he further admits that the "verbal criticisms may have started long before the afafir of the satanic verses".[2] It cannot be argued that "verbal criticisms" of the message delivered by the Prophet and "opposition" to him were two distinct and successive developments. Watt's own thesis that the unbelievers' opposition consisted mainly of verbal criticisms combined with "mild" persecution militates against making such a distinction between "verbal criticisms" and "opposition". Here Watt simply nullifies his thesis about the beginning of opposition though he obviously fails to see it.

Like Margoliouth, again, Watt seems to justify the objections of the unbelievers. Thus with regard to their objection regarding the restoration of the mouldered body he says that this "seemed to them to be a crushing retort" to the Prophet's assertion, a "telling objection to the whole eschatological doctrine".[3] Further, referring to their question, "When is the Hour"? Watt says that the Qur'ân has answers or responses to it "which parry it", but it may have caused embarrassment to Muḥammad.[4] He further says that many of the Qur'ânic passages that "speak about God's 'signs' appear to be responses or reaction to the difficulty about the resurrection of the body", adding that the "stubborn opponents" of the Prophet "wre not convinced by the signs" and "retorted" by saying, "Produce our fathers, then".[5]

Of course the stubborn opponents of the Prophet were not convinced by the signs; but the assumptions that their question "When is the Hour"? or their demand to produce their fathers caused "embarrassment" to or "difficulty" for the Prophet are Watt's own conjectures. The assumptions are only indicative of an attitude identical with that of the unbelievers. For a "believer" in God objections to the doctrine of resurrection and the Day of

1. See *supra*, pp. 616-617.

2. Watt, *op.cit.*, 123.

3. *Ibid.*, 124.

4. *Ibid.*, 125. It may be recalled that Margoliouth terms the Qur'ân's responses to such questions as "sophism" which is said to have left the matter where it was.

5. *Ibid.*

Judgement should not pose any difficulty and should appear as only marks of contumacy on the part of the unbeliever.

"The other main focus of discussion", says Watt, was on the "question of idols and the unity of God" regarding which the Qur'ân took the initiative whereas the pagans, having no theoretical defence of idolatry, merely said that they were following in their fathers' footsteps. He recognizes that this reply of the unbelievers was not so much an accusation against the Prophet of his deviating from the way of the fathers as "a justification in general terms of their conservative outlook".[1] Having said so he suggests that the stories of the Prophets in the Makkan passages of the Qur'ân were partly "a counterblast to this claim to follow the steps of their fathers" and were intended to encourage the Muslims, who "must have felt they were deserting their ancestors" and to make them realize "that they had a distinguished spiritual heritage and that they were members of a community with roots deep in the past".[2]

The main purpose of the stories of the Prophets as related in the Qur'ân is to bring home the theme of monotheism and in that respect they also illustrate that Islam has a "distinguished spiritual heritage" with "roots deep in the past". But the statement that they were "a counterblast" to the unbelievers' claim "to follow the steps of their forefathers" is a mere conjecture on Watt's part based on his further conjecture that the "Muslims must have felt they were deserting their ancestors". This latter conjecture is not supported by any instance of such feeling or hesitation on the part of any early convert to Islam. Moreover, except for Ibrâhîm (p.b.h.) no ancestral lineage for the Arabs is claimed with regard to the many other Prophets mentioned in the Qur'ân. And since the Christians and Jews admit that Ya'qûb (Jacob), Mûsâ (Moses) and 'Îsâ (Jesus, p. b. on them) all preached the doctrine of monotheism the Qur'ân's relating it to their teachings was no counterblast as such to any particular claim by the unbelievers.

As regards the unbelievers' criticisms directed against the Prophethood of Muḥammad (ﷺ) and his claim to have received revelations from Allah, Watt refers to their allegations of the Prophet's being a *majnûn* (mad), a *kâhin* (soothsayer), a *sâḥir* (magician, sorcerer) and a *shâ'ir* (poet) and observes that all these allegations did not mean a denial that the Prophet's

1. *Ibid.*, 127.
2. *Ibid.*

"experiences had in some sense a supernatural cause", for underlying all these terms was the concept of being possessed by a spirit or jinn.[1] Watt also refers to the allegations that the Prophet either himself composed the Qur'ân or was helped by human assistants of whom they mentioned several persons. Watt justifies this allegation thus: "The historian will acknowledge Muḥammad's complete sincerity in his belief that the revelations came to him from outside himself," and will at the same time "admit as a possibility that prior to the revelation Muḥammad heard some of the stories recounted or alluded to in the Qur'ân from the alleged informants".[2]

Now, the objections to the theory of borrowed knowledge, particularly to the theory that the Prophet borrowed a knowledge of the Prophetic stories from the Jews and Christians whom he met in the course of his trade journeys and on other occasions have been noted earlier.[3] It has also been pointed out earlier[4] why since the middle of the nineteenth century the orientalists have emphasized the *sincerity* of the Prophet in his belief that he received revelation from outside himself. It may once again be pointed out here that they do so only to say that in spite of his own belief that the revelation was from outside himself, it was not really so. And Watt here does just that. It may therefore be once again pointed out that no impartial and unprejudiced historian who makes a comparison between the Prophetic stories as told in the Qur'ân and those occurring in the Bible can admit the possibility of the Prophet's recounting the stories after having heard them from the alleged informants. Nor, it should be emphasized, does the Qur'ân consist solely or mainly of the Prophetic stories.

Watt also attempts to justify and reconcile the obviously inconsistent allegations of the unbelievers that the revelation was a human production and at the same time it was magic (*siḥr*). Thus Watt states: The thought "is perhaps that the rhythmic and assonated prose is a spell produced by the sorcerer from his esoteric knowledge, and in this sense human; but he was doubtless supposed to have received the knowledge from the jinns".[5] The unbelievers' inconsistent statements about the revelation were a mark of their confusion,

1. *Ibid.,* 127-128.
2. *Ibid.,* 128.
3. *Supra,* Chap.XI. See spceially pp. 274-290.
4. See preface.
5. Watt, *M. at M.,* 129.

not of their consciously distinguishing between what is called the Prophet's "esoteric knowledge" and the knowledge which he was supposed to have received from the jinns.

Watt further recalls the unbelievers' allegation that the Prophet was not a sufficiently important person to be chosen by Allah as Prophet and that no human being could be a Prophet. Watt also refers to their demand for miracles and observes that though there is some variation in the precise nature of the miracles demanded, "the underlying assumption is always the same, namely, that the Divine can only be manifested in time through a disturbance in the natural order".[1] Watt here clearly appears to advance the Christian view of Divine manifestation. It can only be pointed out therefore that Prophethood is not a manifestation of the Divine. And precisely to guard against the mistake and confusion which led to the elevation of a Prophet to the rank of the Divine the Qur'ân emphasizes time and again that the Prophet was no more than a human being and that he was 's servant (*'abd*), not His manifestation or incarnation! Nor is the Divine "manifested" "through a disturbance of the natural order". Rather "natural order" itself is an unmistakable evidence of the Divine. The birth of a child through a mother alone is no more a disturbance of the natural order than the creation of the original man without father and mother. Be that as it may, here also Watt simply attempts to justify and reconcile the two inconsistent statements of the unbelievers that Muḥammad (ﷺ) was not a sufficiently important person to be a Prophet and that no human being could be a Prophet. Watt is also not quite correct in suggesting that "it was presumably another type of opponent" who advanced the latter objection. The same group of Quraysh leaders made the two inconsistent objections simply out of their confusion and contumacy.

Finally, Watt refers to the unbelievers' allegation of ambition on the Prophet's part and says that though, as the Makkan passages of the Qur'ân show, the Prophet "conceived his function as primarily religious, that of being a warner", in the Makkan situation such a function had political implications, and when events developed these implications to the point at which political action was necessary" he "did not shrink back, since he regarded the leadership thrust upon him as from God".[2] Yes, the Prophet ultimately

1. *Ibid.*, 129-130.
2. *Ibid.*, 130-131.

accepted political leadership which he regarded as thrust upon him by Allah. But that in no way substantiates nor justifies the unbelievers' allegation that he aimed at leadership by claiming himself to be a Prophet of Allah.

Such, in the main, is the treatment of the unbelievers' objections by the orientalists. They generally endorse or approve the objections of the Makkan opposition; while in their overall treatment of the Prophet's life they directly or indirectly adopt and develop the unbelievers' points of view. In all these the orientalists appear, on the one hand, to carry on and continue the views of the Makkan opposition and, on the othere, to advance their own view-points through the views of the unbelievers. Truly does the Qur'ân state: "Thus did those before them say similarly to their sayings. Their hearts are similar". ﴿... كذلك قال الذين من قبلهم مثل قولهم تشابهت قلوبهم...﴾[1]

1. Q.2:118.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE ABYSSINIAN MIGRATION AND THE ORIENTALISTS

The orientalists have divergent, almost mutually exclusive views about the Abyssinian migration. Thus while both Muir and Margoliouth entertain identical opinions about the cause and motive of the migration, Watt not only differs from them but advances a completely new theory about it. Similarly, though all of them uncritically accept the spurious story of the "satanic verses" as a fact, Margoliouth works it into building up one theory relating to an aftermath of the migration. Watt, as seen earlier, separates the story altogether from that affair and presses it into a theory regarding the beginning of opposition to the Prophet.

I. THE VIEWS OF MUIR AND MARGOLIOUTH

Both Muir and Margoliouth substantially accept the explanation given in the sources about the reasons for the migration and say that the Muslims migrated to Abyssinia because the situation had become intolerable for them at Makka. The resources of those who were independent among them, observes Margoliouth, "were insufficient to support the strain of their starving brethren, nor was the life of the latter endurable amid ceaseless vexations and persecutions".[1] Having said so, however, Margoliouth imputes an ulterior motive to the Prophet in sending his followers to Abyssinia. The imputation is apparently based on a hint given by Muir who, speaking not so much about the Prophet's motive as about the apprehensions of the Quraysh leaders writes: "What if the Najashi should support them [the Muslims] with an armed force, and seek to establish a Christian or reformed faith at Mecca, as certain of his predecessors had done in the Yemen"?[2] This hint is inflated by Margoliouth who states that the Prophet, in sending the emigrants to Abyssinia, "perhaps" looked forward "to seeing them return at the head of an Abyssinian army."[3] "There is little reason for doubting", he emphasizes a little later on, "that the founder of Islam, in sending his followers to Axum, designed some such denouement."[4] The reasosns for selecting the country were, according to Margoliouth, that "it had sent effective aid to the per-

1. Margoliouth, *op.cit.*, 156. See also Muir, *op.cit.*, (III edn.) 34-35.
2. Muir, *op.cit.*, 91.
3. Margoliouth, *op.cit.*, 157.
4. *Ibid.*, 166.

secuted Arabian Christians" and "had manifested detestation of the Meccan idolatry" by sending a force "to destroy the Ka'bah".[1] The allusions are to the Abyaainian intervention in Yaman more than half a century previously and to Abrahah's invasion of Makka shortly before the Prophet's birth.

Purely conjectural as the imputation is, it is justifiable neither by the facts nor by reason. It is far from correct to say that Abrahah's invasion against the Ka'ba was due primarily to his detestation of the Makkan idolatry. Nor was the situation in 614-15 any the more favourable for Abyssinia to re-enact her supposed Christian venture in Arabia. As Margoliouth himself notes a little earlier in his work,[2] the defeat at that time of the Christian Byzantines at the hands of the Persians had heightened what he calls the national spirit of the Arabs. Nor, it may be added, could the memory of the fiasco of 'Uthmân ibn al-Ḥuwayrith's attempt to capture political power at Makka with Byzantine backing have been forgotten there. Therefore no sensible Makkan could have thought of that suicidal course of seeking foreign intervention in his land and city. Indeed Margoliouth himself in effect negatives his imputation a little later on when he says that the Prophet "was probably aware that such an invasion would be a doubtful advantage to himself, since the Abyssinians would conquer, if at all, for themselves."[3] Thus does Margoliouth first imagine and assume that the Prophet "perhaps" looked forward to an Abyssinian intervention and then, realizing the unwisdom of the supposed course of action, again imputes that realization to the Prophet. The whole thing takes place in Margoliouth's own imagination and the two contradictory statements merely indicate the stages of his own thinking. If the Prophet could realize that the Abyssinians would conquer only for themselves, he did so at the very start so that he did never look forward to seeing the emigrants "return at the head" or rather at the tail of an Abyssinian army.

In support of his assumption Margoliouth says further that a few years afterwards the Prophet "readily allied himself with another city — it is said — with the express object of fighting all the world in the cause of his religion."[4] The allusion is to the development mainly after the Prophet's migra-

1. *Ibid.*, 157.
2. *Ibid*, 119.
3. *Ibid.*, 170.
4. *Ibid.*, 166.

tion to Madina. Clearly Margoliouth fails to distinguish between the two situations and to see that what he cites in support of his view really constitutes its strongest refutation. The position at Madina is distinguished by the fact that the Prophet had first arranged for the migration of almost all his followers there and had finally betaken himself to that place. (In fact he had been driven out from his city). In the case of the migration to Abyssinia, he himself remained at Makka while the bulk of his followers went to that country. No sensible person would ever send out his followers to a foreign country with the plan of their coming back at the head of the army of that country while he himself remained within the grasp of his deadly enemies. Moreover, however much the cities might have been independent, Madina was not at all a "foreign" land. The Prophet of course built up his following and power there and also sent out reconnoitring missions in some directions, but in all the three major and decisive conflicts with the Makkans — Badr, 'Uḥud and Khandaq — it was the Makkans who had marched upon Madina rather than the Prophet who had gone up to Makka. And when he ultimately did so, public opinion at both the places and elsewhere within the peninsula had definitely turned in his favour so that the "conquest" of Makka was no more than a peaceful and bloodless take-over. It was essentially a victory of ideas over brute physical force and in no way a coming back at the head of a "foreign" army.

In advancing his assumption Margoliouth indeed makes a number of other self-contradictory propositions. Thus, while suggesting that the objective in sending the emigrants to Abyssinia was to persuade the latter to undertake an expedition into Arabia he says at the same time, drawing on the authority of Nöldeke, that it is not known whether the two sides understood each other's language.[1] Yet Margoliouth not only states that the Makkans were "in commercial relations with the state of Axum"[2] but also goes on to say that 'Amr ibn al-'Âṣ, who went to Abyssinia on behalf of the Quraysh leaders to obtain extradition of the emigrants, had also previously been there and had on that previous occasion "revealed to the king the unfaithfulness of one of his queens" by way of avenging his ('Amr's) own wrong.[3] Surely the two sides then understood each other's language. An even stronger contra-

1. *Ibid.*, 156.
2. *Ibid.*, 157.
3. *Ibid.*, 159.

diction of the proposition is made in connection with Ja'far ibn 'Abî Ṭâlib's pleading of the Muslims' case at the Abyssinian court. It cannot be believed, says Margoliouth, that Ja'far translated the *sûrah* which he recited there and which "derives so much of its beauty from the rhyme". Hence, writes Margoliouth , "we may fancy the Abyssinian audience must have been able to guess at the meaning of a tale in a dialect so closely allied to their own."[1] Needless to point out that this fancying by Margoliouth contradicts his earlier fancying that the two sides hardly understood each other's language, in support of which he even cites the authority of Nöldeke!

Again, not trusting all that 'Umm Salamah (r.a.) says about the events at the Abyssinian court Margoliouth says that the indignant denial of the divine sonship of Jesus which *sûrah* XIX contains and which Ja'far recited there, was "without question an addition inserted at a later time", for the Prophet, according to Margoliouth, "avoided that thorny matter till it became politic for him to quarrel with Christians."[2] Further, Margoliouth rejects the report of the Abyssinian ruler's conversion to Islam and says that when the Muslims began to persecute the Christians, they were taunted with the memory of the help given by the Christian Negus. "Fictions were then excogitated", says Margoliouth," "showing how the Negus had been, not a Christian, but a follower of Islam."[3]

Both the above mentioned assumptions are unsubstantiated. Margoliouth does not cite any authority for his statement that the *'âyah* in question was inserted in *sûrah* XIX at a later date. Nor is it a fact that the Prophet differed from the Christians' doctrine about the divine sonship of Jesus at a subsequent date. That Allah does not have a progeny or son had been declared in earlier *sûrahs* as well.[4] Also the underlying assumption that the Qur'ânic passages were the Prophet's own compositions tailored to his convenience is totally wrong. As regards the Negus, the fact of his having believed in the Prophet and embraced Islam is stated in authentic reports, more particularly in the Negus's own communication to the Prophet.[5] As mentioned earlier, the Prophet, on receipt of the news of the Negus's death, even offered

1. *Ibid.*, 161.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*
4. See for instance, Q. 112:3, 25:2.
5. See Muḥammad Ḥamîd Allah, *Majmu'at al-Wathâ'iq al-Siyâsiyyah li al-'ahd al-Nabawî wa al-Khilâfah al-Rashîdah*, sixth print, Beirut, 1987, pp.104-105.

funeral prayer on him in absentia.[1] The statement that the Muslims subsequently began to persecute the Christians is as groundless as is the conjecture that the story of the Negus's conversion was then "excogitated" in reply to the Christians' taunting the Muslims with the memory of earlier Christian help. But the most interesting aspect of Margoliouth's assumption is that he in effect contradicts it a little later on when he states that the Prophet and the Muslims played the "Abyssinian card" with great effect. "The Negus believed Mohammed was a Prophet; that fact could now be flaunted in advertisements", says Margoliouth, and the Makkans "found that Mohammed from being vexatious had become dangerous."[2] Clearly Margoliouth here bases his observation on the "fact" of the Negus's conversion and also admits indirectly that the story of the latter's conversion was not excogitated at a later date!

Finally, with regard the the story of "the satanic verses" Margoliouth not only accepts it uncritically as a fact, he also builds up a theory on it. He relates it to the ban and blockade against Banû Hâshim and states that the Prophet, having realized the "doubtful advantage" of an Abyssinian intervention and having found his resources strained by the ban, and also "probably" having "to bear many a reproach from the clansmen whom he had so seriously compromised", effected the compromise by making some concession to Al-Lat and Al-'Uzzâ and thus obtained the withdrawal of the ban and a recognition of his position as Allah's Prophet.[3] Margoliouth further says that the compromise, "which was regarded as the most discreditable episode in the Prophet's career", was "suppressed" in the chief edition of his biography; but in the edition which preserves it, the "release of the Hashimites from the ban is disconnected from the compromise" and ascribed to the action of certain tender-hearted individuals and to the role of worms.[4] He also says that the compromise, which to him "appears wise and statesmanly", was cancelled because the Prophet, "like others", could not control the spirits he had raised. Many of his followers, who were earnest and "accustomed to speak of Al-Lat and Al-'Uzzâ with contempt and abhorrence, refused to turn round so sharply" and admit the efficacy of the god-

1. *Supra*, p. 679.
2. Margoliouth, *op.cit.*, 169-170.
3. *Ibid.*, 170-171.
4. *Ibid.*, 171-172.

desses. Such persons — an Abyssinian refugee, or perhaps Omar — demanded the withdrawal of the concession." So the Prophet, who had "resigned himself to approving the Meccan polytheism", had "now to resign himself to declaring that he had made a mistake ..... The compromising verses were erased from the Surah, and an apology substituted."[1]

The question of the merit of the story itself has been discussed before.[2] Hence here only the faults in Margoliouth's assumptions and the unreasonableness of the theory as a whole would be pointed out. His premises and conclusions are equally wrong. With regard to his initial assumption on which he has built up this theory, namely, that the Prophet, having sent his followers to Abyssinia, "subsequently" realized the "doubtful advantage" of an Abyssinian intervention and therefore began to think of making a compromise with the Quraysh leaders is totally groundless. For, as shown above, the motive behind the migration to Abyssinia was not to procure that country's military help against the Makkan unbelievers; nor was the Prophet incapable of realizing from the very beginning what is called the doubtful advantage of such a venture. Similarly the reason given of his having been constrained by the exhaustion of his material resources or by the clamour of his disgruntled clansmen is nowhere indicated in the sources. It is simply Margoliouth's own imagination and it is inconsistent with what he himself says a little earlier about the ineffectiveness of the blockade. There he observes that the "Hashimites could obtain food, but at famine prices" and that the "careless generosity of the Meccans and their vacillating wills did much to render the blockade ineffective."[3] He also mentions in this connection the role of Muṭ'im ibn 'Adîyy and Hishâm ibn 'Amr in supplying food to the beleagured Hâshimites.[4] These and other facts, such as the suspension of the ban during the holy months, show that it was never really quite so effective as to necessitate a compromise on so vital an issue as the doctrine of monotheism.

Secondly, if the supposedly disgruntled clansmen of the Prophet had clamoured for obtaining the withdrawal of the ban, as Margoliouth imagines, and if persons like 'Umar had subsequently put pressure on the Prophet to withdraw the concession, as Margoliouth further suggests, the matter of the

1. *Ibid.*, 172-173.
2. *Supra*, Chapter XXIX.
3. Margoliouth, *op.cit.*, 168.
4. *Ibid.*, 168-169.

supposed compromise would have been the subject of prior discussion among the Prophet and his companions and it would have found some mention in the sources. A highly intelligent and "shrewd" judge of human character as Margoliouth maintains the Prophet was, he would not have, without consulting his companions or gauging their opinions in some way, first "resigned himself to approving the Meccan polytheism" and subsequently to have again "resigned himself to declaring that he had made a mistake." Such "tergiversation", to use Margoliouth's expression, would have led earnest souls like 'Umar to renounce Islam and the Prophet's leadership and it would never have ensured the zeal and devotion with which they followed him throughout the rest of their lives.

Thirdly, it is an illogical surmise on Margoliouth's part that the episode of the compromise was suppressed in the chief edition of the Prophet's biography because it was regarded as the most discreditable episode in his life, while in the edition in which it is preserved it is disconnected from the release of the Hâshimites from the ban and the latter event is ascribed to the action of certain individuals, etc. Now, if the edition in which the story is preserved did so by disregarding the fact that the episode of the compromise is most discreditable to the Prophet, there is no reason why it should not have mentioned the supposed pressure put on the Prophet by the supposed disgruntled clansmen and also the supposedly subsequent pressure put by the earnest souls like 'Umar to withdraw the concession. It is also not logical that this very edition should have concocted a less discreditable story, that of the role of certain individuals, in explaining the withdrawal of the ban. It may also be recalled that the same individuals like Muṭ'im ibn 'Adiyy and Hishâm ibn 'Amr who are recognized by Margoliouth to have been active in supplying provisions to Banû Hâshim disregarding the ban, were the very individuals who took the initiative to put an end to it. It is thus obvious that they were not quite in favour of the ban from the very start and that naturally they were the ones to take the lead in cancelling it.

Finally, Margoliouth says that the "compromising verses were erased from the Surah, and an apology substituted". The "apology" and substitute which he mentions[1] is in fact a garbled summary of 22:52. This *'âyah*, as noted earlier,[2] does in no way relate to the supposed revocation of the alleged "satanic verses". Whatever construction is put on this *'âyah*, the very

1. *Ibid.*, 173.
2. *Supra*, pp. 686-695.

fact that it does not occur in *sûrat al-Najm* in which the alleged "satanic verses" were supposedly interpolated, and that it (22:52) was revealed at a much later time disprove the contention that it is a substitute for the "satanic verses."

II. WATT'S THEORIES REGARDING THE ABYSSINIAN MIGRATION

Watt's views about the Abyssinian migration resolve into two theories, namely, his theory about the two migrations or rather the two lists of emigrants and his theory about the cause and motive behind the migration.

Regarding the first theme Watt accepts and reproduces Caetani's reasons for rejecting the view that there were two *hijrahs* to Abyssinia. The main reason, says Watt, is that Ibn Isḥâq "does not in fact say that there were two *hijrahs*", but simply states that the first Muslims to set out were so and so (with the names of ten adults and their dependants) and says: "Then Ja'far b.'Abî Ṭâlib set out, and the Muslims followed him one after another.....", finally giving a list of 83 males, including those in the first list.[1] Watt further says that there "is no mention of the first list returning in order to go back a second time," nor are the lists in order of priority in travelling to Abyssinia, but "presumably" in the order of precedence "in the public registers of the Caliphate." On these grounds Watt states that "there were not two large parties but a number of smaller groups", "a single stream of emigrants." He explains the two lists given by Ibn Isḥâq by saying that "there were two lists extant in his time of people who had gone to Abyssinia, but that he was uncertain about the exact relation to the two lists."[2] Watt mentions in this connection the system of state annuities given initially in accordance with the date of a man's adhesion to Islam and his services in the cause of it. Watt thinks that probably at some time the highest class had been the *muhâjirûn*. Subsequently 'Umar revised the list in 15 H. giving priorities to the Prophet's family and household and those who fought at Badr, relegating those who had returned from Abyssinia at the time of Khybar (7 H.) to two classes below the Badrites. Watt further alludes to the claim made by some at that time of having made two *hijrahs*, one to Abyssinia and the other to Madina. He suggests that the two lists given by Ibn Isḥâq are relics of this controversy over priorities in respect of the distribution of the state annuities.[3]

1. Watt, *M. at M.*, 110-111.
2. *Ibid.*, 111.
3. *Ibid.*, 111-112.

Now, admitting the facts mentioned in connection with the question of annuities and also the reports about certain companions' claiming to have performed two *hijrahs* to their credit, namely, one to Abyssinia and the other to Madina, and also recalling the Prophet's remark regarding the returnees from Abyssinia in 7 H. that they too had two *hijrahs* to their credit, one to Abyssinia and the other from there to himself at Madina, these facts in no way go to explain the two lists or the question of two migrations to Abyssinia. For, neither any Companion nor the Prophet claimed any extra merit for two migrations to Abyssinia. The two migrations spoken of were always with reference to one to Abyssinia and the other to Madina; never with reference to two migrations to the same place. The whole argument about annuity is thus beside the mark and is of no use in explaining either the two lists or the fact of two migrations to Abyssinia. The latter view (that of two migrations to Abyssinia) is based not on the facts adduced by Watt but on the fact of the return of all or most of the first batch of emigrants to Makka after a couple of months' stay in Abyssinia in the first instance and then their again going to that country followed by others in groups over a period of time so that their number ultimately reached about one hundred. Watt ignores this fact of the return of the first batch of emigrants and as such is clearly mistaken in asserting that there "is no mention of the first batch returning in order to go back a second time." Of course Ibn Isḥâq does not say that the first batch of emigrants returned "in order to go back a second time"; but he very prominently mentions their return after a short while. It is also clear from his account and from other sources that many of this first batch remigrated to Abyssinia and were followed by others. This fact of the return of the first batch of emigrants and their remigration to Abyssinia is referred to as the two migrations there. Neither any Companion of the Prophet nor he himself ever implied any extra merit for one's having migrated twice to the same place, Abyssinia.

Equally untenable is Watt's theory about the motive and cause of the migration to Abyssinia. As regards this he rejects the view that hardships and persecution were the reason for the migration and states: "one could hardly suggest that these early worthies of Islam were moved chiefly by fear of suffering."[1] He brings in his favourite theme of rivalry between the *Ḥilf al-Fuḍûl* group of clans and the group round Banû Makhzûm and Banû 'Abd

1. *Ibid.*, 113.

Shams and attempts to cast the Abyssinian migration too in that matrix. He says that those who migrated to Abyssinia belonged, "with two exceptions" to the latter group. On this basis he states that the *Ḥilf al-Fuḍûl* group of clans, seeing that the Prophet "was primarily attacking the high finance which they also disliked", did not have the same eagerness to persecute the Muslims, which, according to Watt, "consisted in bringing pressure to bear on them from within the clan and even within the family", as the Makhzûm and 'Abd Shams group had. And that is why converts from this latter group of clans migrated to Abyssinia.[1] Watt's mistake about the nature of persecution upon the Muslims has been pointed out earlier.[2] Here it may only be said that in thus stating the case he in effect supports the view that persecution was the underlying cause of the migration, whatever might have been the nature of the persecution and by whomsoever it might have been inflicted or on whomsoever its brunt might have fallen. It has also been shown earlier[3] that his theory of continued rivalry between two groups of Quraysh clans as an explanation of the phenomenon of Islam is neither correct nor tenable. Nor is it a fact that the *Ḥilf al-Fuḍûl* group of clans were more sparing in their hostility to the Muslims of their own clans.

Watt of course brings other arguments to bear on his theory. Thus, after having rejected, and very rightly, the theories suggested by "Western scholars" that the Prophet sent away his followers to Abyssinia in order to "remove them from the danger of apostasy", or that they went there in order to engage in trade, or that the Prophet, in sending them there, hoped to get military help from the Abyssinians, Watt suggests that the most weighty reason for the migration was the growth of "a sharp division of opinion within the embryonic Islamic community."[4] As evidence of this division of opinion he states that 'Uthmân ibn Maẓ'ûn, who is mentioned by Ibn Hishâm as the leader of the emigrants to Abyssinia, and who had originally come to the Prophet with four friends, was "almost certainly" the leader of a group and "was in some sense a rival to the group led by 'Abû Bakr." For, at a later date, 'Umar remarked that he thought little of 'Uthmân because he died in his bed, and this, according to Watt, was "a ralic of the rivalry between

1. *Ibid.*
2. *Supra,* pp. 747-756.
3. *Supra,* Chap. IX.
4. Watt, *M. at M.,* 114-115.

'Uthmân b. Maẓ'ûn and the group of 'Abû Bakr and 'Umar."[1]

As other hints of differences among the early Muslims Watt cites the instance of Khâlid ibn Sa'îd of 'Abd Shams, who is said to have been the first to go to Abyssinia but who did not return till Khaybar and showed "some hostility to Abû Bakr" after the Prophet's death.[2] Another instance cited is "the case of al-Ḥajjâj b. al-Ḥârith b. Qays", whom Watt identifies with Al-Ḥârith ibn al-Ḥârith ibn Qays, and says that he was taken prisoner fighting against the Muslims at Badr but who was one of the emigrants to Abyssinia. "If one emigrant to Abyssinia adopted such an attitude", says Watt, "may not others have done so?"[3] Finally, he mentions that Nu'aym ibn 'Abd Allah al-Naḥḥâm was a prominent early Muslim but "a coolness seems to have sprung up between him and the main body [of Muslims], which was primarily Abû Bakr's party"; for Nu'aym "did not go to Madina until A.H.6."[4] Watt says that those who went to Abyssinia were "men with genuine religious convictions" and such men "would be disinclined to accept the policy of Abû Bakr" which "may have been the insistence" that the Prophet "must be accepted as political as well as religious leader because of the socio-political implications of the message he proclaimed", with the "probable implication that Abû Bakr was to be second in command". And since those who migrated to Abyssinia belonged to clans ouside the *Ḥilf al-Fuḍûl* group, they did so because they were not "ready to follow a leader from the clan of Hâshim in view of the old *Ḥilf al-Fuḍûl*."[5] Watt further says that the statement that the Prophet took the initiative in the matter of the migration "may be an attempt to conceal base motives among those who abandoned him in Mecca". Also, it "is in accordance" with the Prophet's "character that he should quickly have become aware of the incipient schism and taken steps to heal it by suggesting the journey to Abyssinia...."[6]

Thus does Watt make use of his favourite theme of the rivalry between two groups of Quraysh clans to explain the Abyssinian migration, or rather he fits the latter incident into the former theme. His treatment is clearly

1. *Ibid.*, 115.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*, 115-116.
4. *Ibid.*, 116.
5. *Ibid,* 116-117.
6. *Ibid.*, 117.

vitiated by an inherent contradiction and employment of double standards on the one hand, and by mis-presentation of the facts, on the other.

As regards the first, it may by pointed out that he has been saying on the one hand, and rightly, that the Prophet's "message" had socio-political implications and that in the then Makkan (or rather world) situation political leadership could not be separated from the religious. And he treats this fact as one of the main reasons for the Qyraysh leaders' opposition to the Prophet. But in explaining the conversion to Islam of the young men from the non-*Ḥilf al-Fuḍûl* group of clans, or whom he calls "the younger sons of the best families", as well as their migration to Abyssinia, he labours under the modern concept of a distinction between "religion" and "politics" (or rather Church and State) and applies that standard to those young men, assuming that their action was guided by an awareness of that distinction. Thus, speaking earlier about their conversion Watt states that when they embraced Islam "there was probably no explicit awareness that economic and political factors were involved in what they were doing" and that the "religious" aspect of the "message" determined their ethos.[1] Now, in explaining their migration to Abyssinia Watt says that they, being at last aware of the political implication of the "message" and being at the same time not ready to accept the political leadership of a Hâshimite, betook themselves to a foreign land! In both the cases Watt makes them make a distinction between "religion" and politics". Thus does Watt apply one standard in analysing the attitude of the Quraysh leaders and another standard in explaining the attitude of their younger sons. He conveniently overlooks the fact that such a distinction simply did not exist at the time and that those sons of the "best families" could not have failed to see the socio-political impications of the "message" while their parents, and even 'Abû Bakr, clearly recognized them (the implications). Watt also overlooks the inherent contradiction in his sugegstion. If the "message" had socio-political implications, as it indeed had, those intelligent sons of the best families could not just have accepted it ignoring its socio-political implications or by separating them from it. In fact they embraced Islam knowing full well all its implications including the leadership of the Prophet in all matters. Watt makes half-fools of them when he holds them unaware of or unconcerned about the socio-political implications of Islam at the time of their embracing it, and also when he says that being at

1. *Ibid.*, 97. See also *supra*, pp. 601-602.

last aware of those implicatiions they chose the course of self-exile instead of abandoning what they thought to be the "religious" aspect of the "message". If their dislike of the "political" leadership of the Prophet was so deep and strong as to make them prefer leaving their own homes and society they would rather have completely forsaken the Prophet and Islam rather than accept a half and a half of each.

Watt is aware that his theory is inconsistent with the well-known fact that it was the Prophet who suggested to his followers to betake themselves to Abyssinia. Hence Watt attempts to explain away this inconsistency by saying that the statement that the Prophet took the initiative in the matter "may be an attempt to conceal base motives among those who abandoned him in Mecca." Who should thus have attempted to conceal the supposed base motives and why are not explained by Watt; but he quickly shifts his ground and states that "it is not necessary to interpret the data in this way". For, according to him, it was in accordance with the Prophet's character that "he should quickly have become aware of the incipient schism and taken steps to heal it by suggesting the journey to Abyssinia." Thus would Watt have us take in the same breath that the young men of the best families "abandoned" the Prophet at Makka because they did not like his "political" leadership and that it was the Prophet who, in order to quickly heal the "incipient schism" suggested the journey to Abyssinia! Now, if the so-called schism was only incipient, there would have been no need for the Prophet to take the rather extreme measure of virtually expelling the greater part of his followers under the pretext of promoting the cause of Islam. He could easily have avoided the supposed incipient schism from developing into a crack by simply keeping a low profile of the political implications of his message. If, on the other hand, the supposed schism had in any way appeared on the surface, why should the "political" non-conformists have readily submitted to the order of exile without raising a voice of protest or objection against it? Why, again, should the Prophet's own daughter and son-in-law (Ruqayyah and 'Uthmân ibn 'Affân) and cousin Ja'far ibn 'Abî Ṭâlib (r.a.) also have been among the first batch of emigrants to Abyssinia? Most important of all, why, also, should 'Abû Bakr himself have started to migrate to that land and travelled a considerable distance when he was persuaded by Ibn al-Dughunnah to return to Makka by standing surety for him? Watt takes note of the fact of Ibn al-Dughunnah's having stood surety for 'Abû Bakr[1] but ignores the other

1. watt, *M. at M.*, 118.

and more important facts connected with the episode. In fact Watt's basic assumption that at that early stage when the fate of Islam was still uncertain 'Abû Bakr insisted on the acceptance of the Prophet's political leadership with the implication that he himself should be the second in command is totally unwarranted. There is no indication in the sources that he did so, nor that the Prophet so employed him in order to make his (the Prophet's) political leadership accepted by the converts. The base motive attributed directly to 'Abû Bakr, and indirectly to the Prophet, is utterly unjustified. Watt simply projects the subsequent greatness of 'Abû Bakr and 'Umar (r.a.) into the past.

The theory as a whole is inconsistent also with another fact admitted by Watt himself, namely, that the migration to Abyssinia took place over a period of time extending over at least a couple of years during which a "stream" of "small groups" went there. Other objections to the theory have been pointed out by W. Arafat.[1] He very rightly mentions that Watt has unjustifiably inflated the personality of 'Uthmân ibn Maẓ'ûn. It is Ibn Hishâm and not Ibn Isḥâq who says that 'Uthmân ibn Maẓ'ûn was the leader of the emigrants to Abyssinia. "There is no hint of an instance where he tried to assert his leadership or opposition." The inference drawn by Watt that 'Umar's reported remark about 'Uthmân ibn Maẓ'ûn was a "relic of enmity between him and the faction led by 'Abû Bakr and 'Umar" is totally groundless. 'Umar, by all accounts, embraced Islam after the migration of the first batch of Muslims, including 'Uthmân ibn Maẓ'ûn, to Abyssinia. Thus, whatever might be the implications of 'Umar's reported remark about the latter, it could not have been "a relic" of the enmity between 'Uthmân and "the faction led by Abû Bakr and 'Umar"; for the supposed "faction led by Abû Bakr and 'Umar" did not simply exist prior to 'Umar's conversion to Islam. Moreover, the story of 'Umar's remark about 'Uthmân as related by Ibn Sa'd shows that 'Umar was in fact "merely relating how when 'Uthmân died in his bed (A.H.2), he suffered 'a great downfall' in his ('Umar's) estimation, but that when later on the Prophet and 'Abû Bakr died in the same way, 'Uthmân was restored in his ('Umar's) esteem. Thus the story implies the opposite view to that expressed by Watt."[2]

Similarly far-fetched is the argument based on the instance of Khâlid ibn

1. *The Islamic Quarterly,* (London), Vol. I, No.3, October 1954, pp. 182-184.
2. *Ibid.,* 183.

Sa'îd (of 'Abd Shams) who did not return from Abyssinia till Khaybar (7 H.) and who is said to have shown "some hostility to Abû Bakr" after the Prophet's death. The fact that Khâlid returned after Khaybar is no argument in support of his supposed hostility to 'Abû Bakr. The Prophet's own cousin Ja'far ibn 'Abî Ṭâlib, who was rather the leader and spokesman of the emigrants to Abyssinia, was among the last to return. On the other hand 'Uthmân ibn Maẓ'ûn himself, whom Watt makes out the leader of the supposed anti-'Abû Bakr faction, returned shortly afterwards and was among those who migrated to Madina and faught at Badr along with the Prophet and 'Abû Bakr. Watt of course attempts to explain away this inconsistency by suggesting that "there never was a complete break between them and Muḥammad" (ﷺ) and that there was a "comparatively speedy reconciliation" between them.[1] One can only point out that if there was no "complete break" and if the "incipient schism" was ended by a "comparatively speedy reconciliation", then why cite the instance of Khâlid ibn Sa'îd's stay in Abyssinia till Khaybar as evidence of his and other's disagreement with the Prophet's policy? The fact is that the supposed incipient schism and the supposed speedy reconciliation are both Watt's own supposition. Like Margoliouth who supposes that the Prophet planned to get Abyssinian military intervention and then realizing that the Abyssinians would conquer only for themselves attributes that realization to the Prophet, Watt also makes an imagination and finding it contradicted by the facts throws out another supposition, attriluting both to the Prophet or his companions.

As regards Watt's identifying Al-Ḥajjâj ibn al-Ḥârith ibn Qays with Al-Ḥârith ibn al-Ḥârith ibn Qays, W. Arafat correctly points out that it is a "case of mixed identity". If the reports of various authorities are to be weighed, certainly Ibn Isḥâq's evidence is the weightiest, and "he has no doubt that these are two distinct persons".[2] Similarly the instance of Nu'aym ibn 'Abd Allah al-Naḥḥâm cited by Watt to illustrate the supposed opposition to 'Abû Bakr's faction is irrelevant. For, as Watt himself recognizes, Nu'aym did not migrate to Abyssinia at all. Nor is the fact of his having migrated to Madina in 6 H. any evidence of his dislike of 'Abû Bakr or of the existence of a faction as such. Moreover, Ibn Sa'd states that Nu'aym stayed at Makka at the insistence of his own needy clan, who allowed him

1. Watt, *M. at M.*, 117.
2. W. Arafat, *op.cit.*, 183.

freedom of his faith. "It is possible that he felt that by emigrating he would be betraying the poor of his clan."[1]

Thus, like the others of Watt's numerous theories this one too is untenable and revolves round the old view of Muir, Margoliouth and others that the Prophet aimed at political leadership from the very beginning and the view that his rise and the other developments are related to the age-old rivalry between two groups of Quraysh clans, to substantiate which Watt only makes contradictory propositions and suppositions.

1. *Ibid.*

SECTION VII
THE LATE MAKKAN PHASE AND MIGRATION TO MADINA

CHAPTER XXXV
LOOKING BEYOND MAKKA FOR SUPPORT

I. THE VISIT TO ṬÂ'IF

It has already been mentioned that shortly after 'Abû Ṭâlib's and Khadîjah's (r.a.) death 'Abû Lahab emerged as the leader of Banû Hâshim.[1] As will be seen presently,[2] already before these developments, in fact during the continuance of the boycott, the Prophet had started looking beyond Makka and approaching the various tribes of Arabia for protection and support. And now that 'Abû Lahab was the leader, the solidarity of Banû Hâshim and Banû Al-Muṭṭalib on the issue of the Prophet's protection broke down and the clan virtually abandoned him. This added an urgency to the need for seeking support from other quarters; for the Prophet's position was no longer tenable at Makka. In fact he appears to have been ousted from the town. Hence he turned his immediate attention to the sister town of Ṭâ'if,[3] situated some sixty miles to the east of Makka, on a comparatively fertile plateau on a cluster of mountains. He went there personally towards the end of Shawwâl in the tenth year of the mission to seek the protection and support of its people.

Accompanied only by his trusted friend and freed slave Zayd ibn Hârithah[4] the Prophet proceeded to Ṭâ'if. For about a month he stayed at that place approaching its people for support and calling them towards Allah and Islam. Banû al-Tahqîf were the main inhabitants of the town and their leaders were three brothers, 'Abd Yâlîl, Mas'ûd and Ḥabîb, sons of 'Amr ibn 'Umayr ibn 'Awf. One of these brothers had married a Qurayshite lady of Makka, Ṣafiyyah bint Ma'mar of Banû Zuhrah. The Prophet specially approached these three brothers and sought their support and help as against the opposition and enmity of the Makkan unbelievers. They not only turned a deaf ear to his request but even abused him and ridiculed him. It is said that in the course of his talk with them one of the brothers sarcastically

1. *Supra*. p. 713.

2. See below, seetion II of this chapter.

3. Ibn Sa'd, I., 210-211.

4. Ibn Isḥâq states that the Prophet went there all alone (Ibn Hishâm, I, 419); but this seems to be incorrect.

remarked that he would tear off the covering of the Ka'ba if the Prophet was indeed Allah's Messenger! Another brother remarked whether Allah did not find any other person to appoint as His Messenger; while the third brother remarked that if he (the Prophet) was really Allah's Messenger he was too high to dispute with; but if he was lying against Allah he was not worthy to talk to.[1]

Being sadly disappointed about them he requested them to at least keep the matter of his talk with them confidential. But they did not concede to him even that little of courtesy. Instead, they created a row over it and instigated their servants, followers and fellow inhabitants of the town to abuse and assault the Prophet and to drive him out of the place. As he at last started leaving the town the inhabitants and street urchins, being instigated by the leaders, lined up along the road, shouting abuses to him and stoning him ruthlessly, aiming particularly at his legs. Zayd ibn Ḥârithah attempted to protect him and shield him against the incessant showers of stones and was in the process himself badly wounded in the head. The Prophet's both legs were similarly wounded and bled heavily. But whenever he sat down being unable to walk, the urchins forced him to stand up and to continue walking. Being thus hooted and pursued for about three miles in the outskirts of the town the Prophet was at last unable to walk. Zayd managed to carry the Prophet on his shoulder and to hurry to a comparatively safer place by the side of a grape orchard and made him recline against its wall. The orchard belonged to 'Utbah and Shaybah, sons of Rabî'ah of Makka. These two persons happened to be present in their orchard. Most probably they had gone to Ṭâ'if to instigate its leaders against the Prophet.[2] Seeing the condition of the Prophet, however, they took pity on him and sent one of their servants, 'Addâs, with a plate of grapes and instructed him to ask the Prophet to eat them. 'Addas was originally from Ninevah and a Christian. He came to the Prophet and offered him the grapes and requested him to eat them. As the Prophet started eating them in the name of Allah (saying *Bismillah*) 'Addâs was surprised and started talking to him. The Prophet's conversation, specially his reference to Prophet Yûnus (p.b.h.) impressed 'Addâs who, out of

1. Ibn Hishâm, I,419; Al-Bayhaqî, *Dalâ'il*, II, 415.

2. Most probably it is to this incident of 'Utbah's and Shaybah's presence at Ṭâ'if that 'Urwah ibn al-Zubayr refers when he says: "there came from al-Ṭâ'if some Quraysh people, men of property, and instigated their followers against the Prophet", etc. See *supra*, p.717 ff. 'Urwah obviously mixes up the incident a little.

intense respect, kissed the Prophet's hand and feet. 'Utbah and Shaybah noticed their servant's behaviour from a distance. When therefore he returned to them they asked him earnestly not to forsake his ancestral religion which, they added, was better than the Prophe's religion.[1]

When the Prophet recouped his energy a little he made a fervent prayer to Allah appealing to Him against his own inability and insufficiency and seeking His pleasure in lieu of all the hardships and difficulties that beset him. This prayer sheds a brilliant light on his depth of feeling and love for his people, his faith and sincerity of purpose and his complete reliance on Allah. The prayer runs to the following effect:[2]

"O my Lord! I complain to Thee against the insufficiency of my own power, the meagreness of my own capacity and my inability against my people. O The Most Merciful of the Merciful, You are the Lord of the weak; and you are my Lord. To whom are you consigning me? To a distant one who treats me with harshness, or to an enemy whom you have enabled to domineer over my affairs. If You are not displeased with me, I do not care; but if I receive Your satisfaction, that is of more value to me. I seek protection with the Light of Your Countenance, which enlightens all darknesses and on account of which the affairs of this world and of the hereafter are in order, against Your wrath befalling me, or Your displeasure descending on me. I submit to Your will till You are pleased with me. There is no power and no strength except through You".

The prayer is remarkable in being free from any complaint or anger against those people who had so badly treated the Prophet. It is indicative of the broadness of his mind and the sublimity of his character and mission. The treatment he had received at Ṭâ'if was the worst he had received so far from the unbelievers. At a later date when 'Â'ishah (r.a.) enquired of him whether he had encountered any other difficult situation comparable to the battle of 'Uḥud, he told her that the treatment he had received at Ṭâ'if was the worst situation he had faced in his life.[3]

1. Ibn Hishâm, I,420,421.; Ibn Kathîr, *Al-Bidâyah wa al-Nihâyah*, III, 135-136. Al-Bayhaqî, *Dalâ'il*, II, 415-416.

2. Ibn Hishâm, I, 420; Al-Ṭabarî, *Târikh*, II, 346 (I/1201); Al-Haythamî, *Majma' al-Zawâ'id*, VI, 38,39; Al-Qurṭubî, *Tafsir*, XVI, 211. The text of the prayer runs as follows:

(اللهمّ إليك أشكو ضعف قوّتي، وقلّة حيلتي، وهواني على النّاس، ياأرحم الرّاحمين، أنت ربّ المستضعفين، وأنت ربّي، إلى من تكلني، إلى بعيد يتجهّمني؟ أم إلى عدوّ ملكته أمري؟ إن لم يكن بك عليّ غضب فلا أبالي، ولكنّ عافيتك هي أوسع لي، أعوذ بنور وجهك الذي أشرقت له الظلمات وصلح عليه أمر الدنيا والآخرة من أن تنزل بي غضبك أو يحلّ عليّ سخطك لك العتبى حتّى ترضى ولا حول ولا قوّة إلا بك)

3. *Bukhârî*, nos, 3231, 7389; *Muslim*, no. 1795; Al-Bayhaqî, *Dalâ'il*, II, 417; 'Abû Nu'aym, *Dalâ'il*, 281-282.

After taking a little rest the Prophet retraced his steps towards Makka. As he reached Qarn al-Ṭha'âlib (or Qarn al-Manâzil)[1] his attention was drawn towards the sky by a piece of cloud shading him. As he looked up he saw the angel Jibrîl there. The latter addressed him saying that Allah had observed all that the people had done to him and that therefore He had deputed the angel in charge of mountains to carry out his wish in repect of his unbelieving people. The other angel then tendered his *salams* to the Prophet and told him that Allah had commissioned him to carry out his (the Prophet's) wish. If he so desired, the two mountains of Makka ('Abû Qubays and Quwayqu'ân) would be uprooted and thrown on those unbelieving people. The Prophet declined the suggestion and said instead that he hoped that Allah would raise from among their descendants those who would worship Him Alone and would not set any partner with Him.[2]

The reply thus given by the Prophet to the angel's suggestion is an indirect corroboration of the report of his prayer given above and shows that even at the height of their opposition and ill treatment towards him the Prophet did not want any revenge on his unbelieving people nor any punishment falling on them. It also shows that even at the darkest hour he did not lose heart and was optimistic about the ultimate acceptance of the truth by his people. And history proves how right he was in his expectation and confidence. The incident was also in the nature of a consolation and reassurance by Allah to His Messenger that his activities and steps were being overseen and that His help would be forthcoming whenever necessary.

The Prophet next stopped at the valley of Nakhlah. Here at night when he was praying a party of *jinn* passed by him and heard his recitation of the Qur'ân. They were so impressed by it that they believed in it and in his mission; and on their return to their compatriots disseminated the message of Islam among them.[3] This incident is clearly referred to in Q. 46:29-32 (*sûrat al-Aḥqâf*) and 72:1-2 (*sûrat al-Jinn*). The initial *'âyahs* of the two pasasges run respectively as follows:

﴿ وإذ صرفنا إليك نفرا مّن الجنّ يستمعون القرءان فلمّا حضروه قالوا أنصتوا فلمّا قضي ولّوا إلىٰ قومهم منذرين *
قالوا يـٰقومنا إنّا سمعنا كتـٰبا أنزل من بعد موسىٰ مصدقا لّما بين يديه يهدى إلى الحقّ وإلى طريق مّستقيم * يـٰقومنا

1. It is now a *mîqât* for the pilgrims coming from the side of Najd.

2. *Bukhârî*, nos. 3231, 7389; *Muslim*, no. 1795; Al-Bayhaqî, *Dalâ'il*, II, 417; Abû Nu'aym, *Dalâ'il*, 281-282.

3. Ibn Hishâm, I, 422; Ibn Sa'd, I, 211-212.

أجيبوا داعي الله وءامنوا به يغفر لكم مّن ذنوبكم ويجركم مّن عذاب أليم﴾ (٤٦ :٢٩-٣٢)

"Behold, We turned towards you a company of jinn listening to the Qur'ân. When they attended it they said: Listen in silence. When it was finished they returned to their folk, warning them (of their sins). They said (to them): O our people, we have indeed listened to a Book sent down after Mûsâ, confirming what came before it. It guides to the truth and to a straight path. O our people, respond to the one who calls to Allah and believe in Him. He will forgive your sins and save you from a painful punishment". (46:29-32).

﴿قل أوحي إليّ أنه استمع نفر مّن الجنّ فقالوا إنّا سمعنا قرءانا عجبا * يهدي إلى الرشد فـئامنّا به ولن نّشرك بربّنا أحدا﴾ (٧٢:١-٢)

"Say: It has been revealed to me that a company of jinn listened to the Qur'ân and they said: We have indeed heard a wonderful Qur'ân. It guides to the right course. So we have believed in it; and we shall never set anyone as partner with our Lord". (72:1-2).

The fact of jinn's acceptance of Islam and coming to the Prophet is attested to by authentic traditions also.[1]

The Prophet then arrived at Ḥirâ' where the question of how to enter Makka came up for consideration. The question was in fact raised by Zayd ibn Ḥârithah in view of the Prophet's having been previously ousted from that town. The Prophet calmly replied that Allah, as Protector of His religion, would surely provide a way out. He then sent a messenger ('Abd Allah ibn 'Urayqiṭ) to the Quraysh leader Al-'Akhnas ibn Sharîq to ask him if he would take the Prophet under his protection. Al-'Akhnas was originally a man of Banû Thaqîf; but he had settled at Makka as a confederate of Banû Zuhrah and had in the course of time become its most distinguished leader. He sent his reply saying that since he was only a confederate (*ḥalîf*), his protection would not be of any avail against any original Quraysh clan. Next the Prophet sent his messenger to Suhayl ibn 'Amr of Banû 'Âmir asking for his protection. The latter similarly pointed out that Banû 'Âmir clan was not entitled to offer protection against such clans as Banû Ka'b. Then the Prophet sent his emissary to Muṭ'im ibn 'Adiyy of Banû Nawfal. He agreed to offer protection to the Prophet. Accordingly Muṭ'im, accompanied by his sons with arms, went to the Ka'ba compound and asked the Prophet to enter

1. *Bukhârî*, No. 4921; *Muslim*, nos. 449,450; *Musnad*, I, 436; Al-Bayhaqî, *Dalâ'il*, 225-233; Abu Nu'ajm, *Dalâ'il*, 363-366; Ibn Kathîr, *Tafsîr*, VII, 272-287.

the town. He went to the Ka'ba and circumambulated it as Muṭ'im and his sons stood by.[1] One of the Quraysh leaders (either 'Abû Sufyân or 'Abû Jahl) asked Muṭ'im whether he was there to offer protection or had become a follower of the Prophet. Muṭ'im replied that he was there as protector. The Qurayshite leader remarked that Muṭ'im's protection could not be dishonoured. The Prophet did not forget this help of Muṭ'im's and also his role in ending the boycott against Banû Hashim. Muṭ'im died shortly afterwards. After the victory at Badr the Prophet remarked with reference to the Quraysh prisoners of war that were Muṭ'im alive and asked for the release of those men, he would have gladly done so.[2]

II. THE APPROACH TO THE TRIBES

Muṭ'im ibn 'Adiyy's standing surety for the Prophet afforded him a respite for resuming the work of seeking support from elsewhere. As already indicated, the process had started even before the end of the boycott. This was only natural; for, in view of the very advanced age of 'Abû Ṭâlib and the state of his health everyone could realize that he would not live much longer and, of all persons, the Prophet could visualize that the situation would be far worse for him and his cause at Makka after 'Abû Ṭâlib's death. Hence he started approaching the tribes and their leaders as they came to Makka on pilgrimage and other occasions seeking their support. Historians like Ibn Isḥâq, Al-Ṭabarî, Ibn Sa'd and others of course speak of the approach to the tribes after having narrated the death of 'Abû Ṭâlib and the visit to Ṭâ'if; but they do not really say that such approaches were made *after* those events. Indeed their description and the known chronology of the main events in the last three years of the Makkan period make it quite clear that the process of approaching the tribes had started almost simultaneously with the beginning of the boycott. The migration to Madina, as is well known, took place at the beginning of the 14th year of the mission; the Second 'Aqabah pledge took place at the end of the 13th year; the First Aqabah pledge at the end of the 12th year and the first batch of six Madinans embraced Islam at Aqabah at the end of the 11th year of the mission. Now, Ibn Isḥâq very distinctly states that the Prophet came upon the Madinans on the last mentioned occasion in the course of his presenting himself to the tribes which he used to do "every year" at the *ḥajj* season.[3] This means that

1. Ibn Hishâm, I, 381; Ibn Sa'd, I, 212.
2. *Bukhârî*, nos. 3139, 4020.
3. Ibn Hishâm, I, 428; Al-Ṭabarî, *Târîkh*. II, 353 (I/1209)

he had already started approaching the tribes for support and protection at least a couple of years earlier, i.e., when the boycott and blockade of Banû Hâshim were still in force. It should be recalled that during the *ḥajj* season the boycott and blockade in effect ceased to exist and the Prophet, like everyone else, could freely move about in Makka, Minâ and other places, preaching to the people and approaching the tribes. In a way the boycott itself gave an impetus to approaching the outside tribes. For, as the Quraysh coalition attempted to draw the outside tribes like Kinânah to their side, it was only natural that Banû Hâshim and the Prophet would, on their part, do all that was possible to counteract that. In fact, as mentioned earlier, during one *ḥajj* season when the boycott was theoretically in force the Prophet proposed even to visit the tent of Banû Kinânah with whom the Quraysh had entered into a pact for enforcing the boycott against Banû Hâshim.[1] Similarly a report by 'Urwah ibn al-Zubayr also mentions that the Prophet had already started approaching the tribes seeking their support and protection when the charter of boycott was set aside.[2] And both Al-Bayhaqî and 'Abû Nu'aym very appropriately place the visit to Ṭâ'if within their sections on "Approach to the tribes".[3]

It should of course be remembered that since the beginning of "public preaching" the Prophet used to visit the pilgrims of different places and tribes coming to Makka and Minâ during the *ḥajj* seasons and to invite them towards Islam. This new phase of his approach to them was, however, different. This time, in addition to his calling them to Islam and towards Allah, he frankly and literally "offered himself" to them seeking their protection and help and asking them to take him to their territory.[4] For that purpose he used to meet specially the leaders of important and powerful tribes not only during the *ḥajj* seasons but also when they visited Makka and the fairs of 'Ukâẓ, Dhû al-Mijâz and Majanna. In thus approaching them he invariably called them towards Allah and asked them to embrace Islam; but he made it clear that he had no intention to impose Islam on anyone. He told them that if they helped him and gave him protection to enable him to propagate the

1. *Bukhârî*, no. 1590; *Musnad*, II, 237.

2. Abû Nu'aym, *Dalâ'il*, 295 (no. 221).

3. *Ibid.*, 281-300; Al-Bayhaqî, *Dalâ'il*, II, 413-415.

4. *Musnad*, III, 322; *Tirmidhî*, *K. Fadâ'il al-Qur'ân*, b. 23 (*Tuḥfat al-'Aḥwadhî*, no. 3093); Abû Dâ'ûd, *Sunan*, *K. al-Sunnah*, b. 21, h. 1; Ibn Mâjah, *Sunan*, no. 201 (Vol. I, p. 73).

truth with which he had been commissioned by Allah, they would get the reward of paradise from Him.[1] Sometimes he is reported to have indicated that if they hepled him establish the truth they would become the masters of all Arabia and the neighbouring lands would be submissive to them.[2]

It appears that the Prophet, in seeking help from the tribes, did not limit his choice to any particular region or area of the peninsula. Rather he sought support from any of the influential tribes in the north, south, east or west of Arabia. The most important of the tribes whom he approached at different times were: (1) Banû 'Âmir ibn Ṣa'ṣa'ah, (2) Banû Maḥârib ibn Khasafah, (3) Banû Fizârah, (4) Banû Ghassân, (5) Banû Murrah, (6) Banû Ḥanîfah, (7) Banû Sulaym, (8) Banû 'Abs, (9) Banû Naḍr, (10) Banû al-Bakkâ', (11) Banû Kindah, (12) Banû Kalb, (13) Banû al-Ḥârith ibn Ka'b, (14) Banû 'Udhrah, (15) Banû al-Ḥaḍârima, (16) Banû Bakr ibn Wâ'il, (17) Banû Shaybân ibn Tha'labah and (18) Banû Hamdân.[3] These tribes were scattered all over Arabia. For instance no.1, Banû 'Âmir, was settled in Najd but its influence extended up to Ṭâ'if; no.4 (Ghassân) lived in the north-west of Arabia where one of their princes was a vassal of the Byzantine empire. No.6 (Banû Ḥanîfah) lived in Al-Yamâmah in east Arabia and was militarily very strong. No.7 (Banû Sulaym) lived near Khaybar. No.11 (Banû Kindah) lived in south Arabia. Its influence extended from Ḥaḍramaut to Yaman. No.12 (Banû Kalb) lived in north Arabia and its sphere of influence extended from Dumat al-Jandal to Tabûk. No.16 (Banû Bakr ibn Wâ'il) was a very powerful tribe whose jurisdiction extended from mid-Arabia to the eastren coastal region up to the confines of the Persian empire. Sometimes it came into armed conflicts with the latter. The other tribes also were scattered in the north, south, east and west of Arabia.

The tribes thus approached could realize the implications of the Prophet's proposals; for the fact of his conflict with his own people at Makka and the main aspects of his teachings were by then fairly known to them. Most of the tribes could visualize that to take the Prophet under their care and protection would involve them in hostility not only with the Makkans, but with the other Arabian tribes and, probably, also with some of the neighbouring

1. Ibn Hishâm, I, 422; Al-Ṭabarî, *Târikh,* II, 348 (I/1204).

2. Ibn Sa'd, I, 216.

3. *Ibid.,* 216-217; 'Abû Nu'aym, *Dalâ'il,* 293; Ibn Kathîr, *Al-Bidâyah wa al-Nihâyah,* III, 146.

powers. It is also related that sometimes when the Prophet went round the camps of the principal tribes at Minâ, 'Abû Lahab followed him from one camp to another, speaking against him and telling them not to pay any heed to his words.[1] Under the circumstances the attitude of the tribes was either one of outright rejection, or of hostile argumentation, or of hesitation and wavering, or of bargaining about the material benefits that would accrue to them if with their help the Prophet became successful in his mission. Often a tribe would dismiss him by remarking that a man's own people knew him best and that when he had caused trouble among them he was not likely to do any good to the others. Such attitudes are illustrated by the glimses we get of the details of some of his negotiations with the different tribes.

Thus the Prophet approached Banû Kalb, specially their leading branch, Banû 'Abd Allah. He invited them towards Allah, asked them to embrace Islam and offered himself to them seeking their support and protection. They did not accept him.[2] Similarly he once came upon Banû Ḥanîfah in their camp at Minâ, urged Islam on them and sought their help and protection. They most rudely rejected him and abused him.[3] It was from that tribe that subsequently Musaylamah al-Kadhdhâb rose and opposed Islam most vehemently during the *khilâfah* of 'Abû Bakr (r.a.). Again, the Prophet came upon Banû 'Âmir ibn Ṣa'ṣa'ah in their camp, urged Islam on them and offered himself to them for their support and protection. One leading member of the tribe, Bayhara, said to himself that if he took the Quraysh youth (the Prophet) with him and espoused his cause, he (Bayharah) would be able to bring all Arabia under his control. So saying to himself he asked the Prophet whether, if with their help he succeeded in his mission, Banû 'Âmir would be the ones to succeed him in the ruling power. The Prophet replied that the matter of bestowing ruling power on anyone rested entirely with Allah. He bestows it on whomsoever He likes. Naturally this reply did not please Bayharah who said that it was simply unacceptable that the people of Banû 'Âmir would render themselves a target of enmity of all the other Arab tribes for the Prophet's sake and that when he succeeded the ruling power would be for others than Banû 'Âmir. Hence, he added, he had no need for

1. Ibn Hishâm, I, 423.

2. Ibn Hishâm, I, 424-425. A slightly different version of the report is given in Abû Nu'aym, *Dalâ'il*, 288-290.

3. Ibn Hishâm I, 925.

the Prophet.[1] The sequel to the story is no less interesting. It is said that when those people of Banû 'Âmir returned home one of their elders who could not come to *ḥajj* due to old age and debility, was very sad when he heard of the incident, rebuking his people for their folly and remarking that they had missed an unprecedented opportunity the like of which would never again come their way and that no descendant of Ismâ'îl (p.b.h.) would ever make a false claim to Prophethood.[2]

Almost similar in purport was the reply of Banû Kindah whom the Prophet approached. They said that they would help and protect him if he agreed that after him they would succeed as the rulers of the land. The Prophet declined to make such a commitment.[3] It may be emphasized here that in both the instances of his negotiations with Banû 'Âmir ibn Ṣa'ṣa'ah and Banû Kindah the Prophet's reply was very correct and appropriate. He was seeking support for a cause and not for capturing the political power of the land. He could not therefore agree to a condition which was neither his aim nor in his power to fulfil. Such a prior agreement would have given a political colour to his mission and would have thus defeated its purpose.

Similarly the Prophet approached Banû Ḥamdân. It is reported that on one ocacsion he was going round the tents of the various tribes saying: "Are there any people who would take me along with them to their territory?" At this a man of Banû Hamdân came forward and agreed to take the Prophet with him. But soon afterwards the man thought that his tribe would not probably approve of his act. Hence he quickly came back to the Prophet and said that he would rather consult his tribe first about the matter and would come back in the following year.[4]

Another report gives some details of the Prophet's approach to Banû 'Abs. He, accompanied by Zayd ibn Ḥârithah, came upon the tent of the tribe at *Jamrat al-'Ûlâ* and invited them to accept Islam and to help him and take him with them. The report adds that in the previous years too the Prophet had similarly approached the tribe but none did respond to his requests. This time there was Maysarah ibn Masrûq al-'Absî with the group. He said to his people: "By Allah, it will be wise to accept his message and to

1. *Ibid.*, 424-425.
2. *Ibid.*
3. Abu Nu'aym, *Dalâ'il*, 291.
4. *Ibid.* 291-292; *Musnad*, III, 390; Ibn Kathîr, *Al-Bidâyah wa al-Nihâyah*, III, 146.

take him in our midst; for, by Allah, his affair shall prevail and it shall reach every quarter". But Maysarah's people disagreed with him saying that they had not the capacity to bear the burden which that action involved. The Prophet, however, became somewhat hopeful about Maysarah and talked to him. After listening to the Prophet Maysarah remarked: "How good and enlightening are your words! But my people are against me; and when they are opposing it, the others (of the tribe) will be still more against it". The Prophet then left the place. Years later when the Prophet performed the Farewell pilgrimage Maysarah presented himself to him and embraced Islam saying that he had been inclined towards Islam since he had met him (the Prophet) for the first time at Minâ.[1]

More graphic is the account given in a report by 'Alî ibn 'Abî Ṭâlib (r.a.) of another occasion. He says that the Prophet, accompanied by him and 'Abû Bakr (r.a.) once came upon a group of Arabs of Banû Rabî'ah at Minâ. 'Abû Bakr talked to them for sometime with not much success. Then the Prophet proceeded to another group of people of Banû Shaybân ibn Tha'labah. Among them were Mafrûq ibn 'Amr, Hânî ibn Qubayṣah, Al-Muthannâ ibn al-Ḥârithah and Nu'mân ibn Sharîk. Mafrûq was the closest to 'Abû Bakr; so he started talking to him (Mafrûq), enquiring about their military strength and defence capabilities. Mafrûq's reply indicated that they were quite strong in both respects. Then 'Abû Bakr introduced the Prophet to him. The Prophet then talked to him. Mafrûq asked the Prophet about his mission and teachings. He explained Islam to him and called on him to testify that there is none worthy of worship (*'ilâh*) except Allah and that he (the Prophet) was His Messenger. He also told them that he was seeking their protection and support so that he could carry out what Allah had commanded him to do; for the Quraysh had rejected him, defied Allah's words and had been content with falsehood instead of the truth. Mafrûq sought further information. Thereupon the Prophet recited unto him *'âyahs* 151-153 of *sûrat al-'An'âm* (*sûrah* 6). Mafrûq desired to listen to more of the Qur'ân adding that this could not have been man's words or else they would have recognized it. So the Prophet recited unto him *'âyah* 90 of *sûrat al-Naḥl* (16). Mafrûq was impressed and he introduced the Prophet to their chief and religious leader, Hânî' ibn Qubayṣah. The latter said that he had already

1. Abû Nu'aym, *Dalâ'il,* 293-294 (no. 220). See also *Al-'Iṣâbah,* no. 8381 (Vol.III, 469-470) and Ibn Kathîr, *Al-Bidâyah wa al-Nihâyah,* III, 145-146.

heard what the Prophet had uttered and believed it to be true; but that he had not yet thought over the consequences of what was being presented to them and it would not be wise to abandon their ancestral religion just on one sitting with the Prophet. Moreover, the rest of his people were not there and it would not be proper to impose some decision on them before consulting them. And as if to get support for what he had said Hânî introduced Al-Muthannâ ibn al-Ḥârithah, the leader of their military affairs, to the Prophet. Al-Muthannâ said that he also had heard the Prophet's conversation and that his reply was the same as that of Hânî. Al-Muthannâ further said that their influence extended over the north-eastern coastal region up to the borders of the Persian empire and that they had lately entered into a treaty with Persia undertaking not to introduce any changes in the existing state of affairs nor to give quarters to anyone who advocated such changes, adding that as for the Arabs they could well help and defend the Prophet against them, but as against Persia it was not within their power to do so. The Prophet thanked Al-Muthannâ for his frank reply but said that when one takes up the cause of Allah one does not make any exception. Then he left them.[1]

The report is significant in a number of ways. It very clearly shows that Banû Shaybân ibn Tha'labah, like many others of the tribes thus approached by the Prophet, were aware of the full implications of their taking the Prophet under their care and protection. Secondly, the disclosure by Al-Muthannâ that they had lately concluded a pact with Persia undertaking not to do anything which would tend to change the *staus quo*, particularly not to give quarters to anyone who advocated any change in the situation, shows that the neighbouring powers like Persia were very closely following the developments in Arabia following the Prophet's propagation of the truth. Indeed the last mentioned provision of the treaty between Banû Shaybân and Persia seems particularly aimed at him. And precisely for that reason the Prophet's insistence on unconditional support for the cause was very appropriate.

The report ends with the statement that after having left the camp of Banû Shaybân the Prophet came upon the people of 'Aws and Khazraj who made the oath of allegiance to him.[2] This means that the meeting with Banû Shaybân took place either in the 11th or the 12th year of the mission and that

1. Abu Nu'aym, *Dalâ'il,* 282-288.
2. *Ibid,* 288.

they were one of the last tribes to be thus approached by the Prophet. In any case, it was destined for the people of Madina to have the fortune and privilege of becoming the Helpers (*anṣâr*) of the Prophet.

II. THE SITUATION AT MADINA

The town of Madina, formerly called Yathrib, is situated some three hundred miles north of Makka. At the time it was inhabited by three main Jewish tribes, Banû al-Naḍîr, Banû Qainuqâ' and Banû Qurayẓah, and two Arab tribes, 'Aws and Khazraj. The Jews had left their own land as a result of successive foreign invasions and had settled in Madina a few centuries before the advent of Islam. Similarly the tribes of 'Aws and Khazraj are said to have originally come from Yaman and settled at Madina. The Jews were educationally more advanced and became in the course of time financially better off. As such they came to exercise considerable influence over the two Arab tribes, most of whom were pagans worshipping a number of idols. The Jews' influence over them was facilitated by the perennial rivalry and jealousy between the two Arab tribes themselves. Despite their common ancestry and the existence of close blood and marital relationships between them, and despite also the fact that the Jews were their common enemy, the two Arab tribes were engaged in constant hostilities and conflicts with each other. Within the span of one and a half century berfore the rise of Islam there were at least ten devastating wars between them, besides minor armed clashes. The Jews naturally took advantage of the situation and often played the one tribe against the other; for in the division and weakness of the two Arab tribes the Jews saw their own security and the continuance of their influence. At times they used even to threaten the two tribes by saying that the time for the advent of a Prophet had drawn near and when he appeared they, with his help, would inflict such a devastation upon 'Aws and Khazraj as had befallen the 'Âd and Thamud of old. In spite of this situation the two tribes could not make up their mutual jealousies and hostilities. Indeed, when the Prophet and the Muslims were facing the boycott and blockade of the Makkan unbelievers, the two tribes were preparing themselves for another suicidal conflict, namely the battle of Bu'âth, which took place some five years before the Prophet's migration to Madina. It was against the background of this impending conflict that the earliest contact with some of the leaders of that place seems to have taken place.

IV. THE EARLIEST CONTACTS WITH MADINA

According to Ibn Isḥâq,[1] Swayd ibn Ṣâmit of Banû 'Âmir ibn 'Awf of the 'Aws tribe came to Makka on *'umrah* or *ḥajj*. He was known among his people as *Kâmil* (Perfect) on account of his noble pedigree and all-round personal accomplishments. He was also distantly related to the Prophet in that Swayd's mother Laylâ bint 'Amr was a sister of Salmâh bint 'Amr, mother of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, the Prophet's grandfather. On coming to know of Swayd's arrival at Makka the Prophet met him and invited him to accept Islam. He said to the Prophet: "Perhaps you have something like what I have". The Prophet demanded to know what he had. He said that he had the wisdom (or journal) of Luqmân with him. The Prophet asked him to recite it. He did so. Thereupon the Prophet said: "What you have related is all good; but what I have with me is far better. It is the Qur'ân. It has been sent down on me by Allah. It is guidance and enlightenment". Having said so he recited some part of the Qur'ân unto Swayd and once again asked him to embrace Islam. He did not decline and was apparently impressed, saying that what he had heard was indeed good. He then returned to Madina and was shortly afterwards killed by a Khazrajite before the battle of Bu'âth.[2]

The next instance of the Prophet's contact with a Madinan leader was clearly related to the background of the battle of Bu'âth. It is related that 'Abû al-Hythar 'Anas ibn Râfi' of Banû 'Abd al-Ashhal of the 'Aws tribe, accompanied by a few men of his clan including 'Iyâs ibn Mu'âdh came to Makka for the purpose of making a military alliance with the Quraysh against the tribe of Khazraj. On coming to know of their arrival the Prophet met them, talked to them and asked them whether they would like to have something better than what they had come for. They grew inquisitive and asked what it was. The Prophet then told them that he had been sent by Allah as His Messenger. Therefore he invited them to worship Allah Alone and not to set any partner with Him. He further told them that Allah had sent down a book to him, the Qur'ân, and then recited unto them some parts of it. He also explained Islam to them. On listening to him 'Iyâs ibn Mu'âdh, who was a young man, was so impressed that he addressed his companions saying: O my people, by Allah, this is better than what we have come for. But

1. Ibn Hishâm, I, 425-427.

2. *Ibid*, 427. Supporting Ibn Isḥâq Ibn 'Abd al-Barr also says that Swayd was killed before the battle of Bu'âth (*Al-Istî'âb*, II, 677). Ibn al-Athîr, however, states that Swayd was killed in the battle of Bu'âth (*'Usd al-Ghâbah*, II, 337, No. 2347).

the group-leader 'Abû al-Hythar's enmity and jealousy against the Khazraj had so blinded him that he grasped a handful of dust in an extreme mood of irritation, threw it at 'Iyâs's face and remarked that that was not for what they had taken the trouble to come to Makka. 'Iyâs was silenced at this and the Prophet left them.[1] Abû al-Hythar's mission to the Quraysh was not, however, successful. Shortly after this the battle of Bu'âth took place. According to most of the sources this had happened four or five years before the Prophet's migration to Madina. This means that the instances of contact with the people of Madina noted above all took place before the end of the boycott and blockade in the early part of the 10th year of the mission. 'Iyâs ibn Mu'âdh did not however live long and died shortly after the battle of Bu'âth and before the Prophet's migration to Madina. It is reported that those who were present at the time of 'Iyâs's death found him praising Allah and declaring His Oneness (*tawḥîd*) on his death-bed. They had no doubt that he died a Muslim and had contacted Islam at the meeting with the Prophet at Makka.[2]

According to another report the first to embrace Islam from among the people of Madina were As'ad ibn Zurârah and Dhakwân ibn 'Abd Qays. They are reported to have come to Makka to settle some matter with 'Utbah ibn Rabî'ah. When they met him he told them, pointing to the Prophet: "This performer of prayer has engrossed our attention from everything. He presumes he is Allah's Messenger". On hearing this remark Dhakwân whispered to his companion, As'ad: "Look, this is your religion". For As'ad ibn Zurârah and another person of Madina, 'Abû al-Haytham ibn al-Tayyahân, used to talk about monotheism. Dhakwân and As'ad then met the Prophet who explained Islam to them. They embraced it and returned to Madina. As'ad subsequently met 'Abû al-Haytham ibn al-Tayyahân and informed him all about the Prophet and Islam. So he also embraced Islam.[3] Yet another report says that Râfi' ibn Mâlik al-Zuraqî and Mu'âdh ibn 'Afrâ' came to Makka to perform *'umrah* when they heard about the Prophet and his affairs. So they went to him, heard an exposition of Islam and embraced it.[4]

1. Ibn Hishâm, I, 427-428.
2. Ibn Hishâm, 428.
3. Ibn Sa'd, I, 218.
4. *Ibid.*

Whatever the truth about the two last mentioned reports regarding the early conversion to Islam of Dhakwân and As'ad ibn Zurârâh on the one hand, and of Râfi' ibn Mâlik and Mu'âdh ibn 'Afrâ' on the other, they are indicative of the fact that news about the Prophet and Islam was penetrating into Madina, as it indeed was doing into the other parts of Arabia. There is no doubt, however, that As'ad ibn Zurârah was one of the six persons whom the Prophet met at 'Aqabah at the end of the 11th year of his mission and who embraced Islam on that occasion. Similarly As'ad and Dhakwân were among the 12 persons who made the First Pledge at 'Aqabah at the end of the 12th year. Also there is no doubt that the Prophet's meeting with Swayd ibn Ṣâmit and 'Iyâs ibn Mu'âdh had taken place before the battle of Bu'âth. These early contacts, indeed 'Iyâs's desire for the "better" thing for his people ultimately bore fruit; for, by the time he died, or very shortly after it, the first batch of six of his fellow citizens of Madina committed themselves to the cause of Islam at 'Aqabah at the end of the 11th year of the mission.

CHAPTER XXXVI
Al-'ISRÂ' AND *AL-MI'RÂJ*

Before proceeding further with the narrative of the Prophet's efforts to obtain support and help from beyond Makka it would be worthwhile to refer to the greatest of all miracles that occurred to any of the Prophets and Messengers of Allah, namely, *al-'Isrâ'* and *al-Mi'râj*. The following is only a brief account of this memorable event as gleaned from the Qur'ân and the authentic traditions.

I. *'AL-ISRÂ'* AND *AL-MI'RÂJ*

The literal meanings of *al-Isrâ'* and *al-Mi'râj* are, respectively, the "Nocturnal Journey" and "The Ascension". They refer to the most miraculous events in the Prophet's life, that of Allah's making him on one night travel along with the angel Jibrîl at a lightning speed from the Ka'ba to Bayt al-Maqdis (Jerusalem) and thence to ascend to the higest limit of the seven skies and there to see a number of Allah's signs and to receive some very important instructions and revelations, and then to return to Makka during the same night. In the religious parlance of Islam the two terms *al-'Isrâ'* and *al-Mi'râj* are used interchangeably. Indeed as the entire journey happened within a night both the phases may be included in the first term, *al-'Isrâ'*; and Imâm Muslim very appropriately calls his section on the reports concerning these events *Bâb al-'Isrâ'*. In popular use, however, the term *al-Mi'râj* is used more commonly to refer to both.

These momentous events are very distinctly mentioned in the Qur'ân. Thus the very first *'âyah* of *sûrah* 17, which is also named *Sûrat al-'Isra'* (or *Banû Isrâ'îl)* states:

﴿ سبحـٰن الذى أسرىٰ بعبده ليلا مّن المسجد الحرام إلى المسجد الأقصا الذى بـٰركنا حوله لنريه من ءايـٰتنا إنه هو السميع البصير ﴾ (١٧ : ١)

"Glory to Him Who made His servant travel one night from the Sacred Mosque (Ka'ba) to the Farthest Mosque (*Bayt al-Maqdis*), whose environs We have blessed, in order that We might show him of Our Signs. Verily He is the All-Hearing, All-Seeing". (17:1)

While this *'âyah* refers specifically to the *'isrâ'* from the Ka'ba to Bayt al-Maqdis (Jerusalem), *'âyahs* 13-18 of *sûrat al-Najm* (53) refer to the ascension thus:

﴿ ولقد رءاه نزلة أخرىٰ * عند سدرة المنتهىٰ * عندها جنة المأوىٰ * إذ يغشى السدرة ما يغشىٰ * ما زاغ البصر وما طغىٰ * لقد رأىٰ من ءايـٰت ربه الكبرىٰ ﴾ (٥٣ : ١٣-١٨)

"And indeed he (the Prophet) saw him (Jibrîl in his real form) at a second descent, near *Sidrah* (Lote Tree) the terminus. By it is *Jannat al-Ma'wâ* (Garden of Abode), when the *Sidrah* was covered by what covered it. The eye did not deviate, nor did it transgress. He indeed saw (some) of the greatest signs of his Lord ". (53:13-18)

This passage speaks clearly of the Prophet's viewing some of the "Greatest Signs of His Lord" near the *Sidrah* or "Lote Tree" which is the terminus beyond which no created being can proceed. The two passages thus speak respectively of the first and the last part of the journey as a whole, that is *al-'Isrâ'* and *al-Mi'râj* together, or the most important parts of it.

Another Qur'ânic passage which refers to the last part of the journey and its sequel is 17:60. Its relevant part runs as follows:

﴿ وإذ قلنا لك إنّ ربّك أحاط بالنّاس وما جعلنا الرُّءيا التي أريـنـك إلا فتنة للنّاس... ﴾ (١٧ : ٦٠)

"And (recall) when We said to you: 'Verily your Lord encompasses mankind. And We did not set the signs We showed you except as a test for the people..." (17:60).

This *'âyah* clearly refers to the sequel of the incident which, when the Prophet gave it out, was disbelieved by many. It is said in consolation of the Prophet and as a rebuttal to the skeptics that Allah is very much aware and observant of those men and that it was His plan that the "signs" shown to the Prophet should be a "trial" and "test" (of faith) for men".[1] The same allusion is contained in 17:1 which ends with the statement: "Verily He (Allah) is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing"; i.e., of how the disbelievers treat the account of the *'Isrâ'* and the *Mi'râj*.

Obviously these Qur'ânic references to the incident, though very precise and positive, are nonetheless very brief. The details are, however, available in the rather numerous reports that exist on the subject. They emanate from the Companions who themselves heard about it from the Prophet;[2] and the number of Companions who thus speak on the subject, mostly independently of one another, are no less than twenty, including 'Umm Hânî', 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abbâs,[3] 'Abd Allah ibn Mas'ûd,[4] 'Anas ibn Mâlik,[5] 'Abû Hurayrah,[6]

1. See below (text) for further discussion on the *'âyah*.

2. Almost all the important reports are collected in Al-Ṭabarî, *Tafsîr*, XV, 2-16; Al-Qurṭubî, *Tafsîr*, X, 205-208 and Ibn Kathîr, *Tafsîr*, V, 4-39.

3. *Bukhârî*, nos. 3239, 3396, 3888, 6613; *Muslim*, nos. 165, 176; *Musnad*, I, 257,374.

4. *Musnad*, I, 375, 387, 422.

5. *Bukhârî*, nos. 3370, 4964, 5610, 5717, 6581; *Muslim*, nos. 165; *Musnad*, III, 120, 128, 148-149, 224, 231-232, 230-240.

6. *Bukhârî*, no. 5576; *Musnad*, II, 353, 363.

'Abû Dharr,[1] Jâbir ibn 'Abd Allah,[2] Mâlik ibn Ṣa'ṣa'ah,[3] Ḥudhayfah ibn al-Yâman,[4] 'Ubayy ibn Ka'b,[5] and 'Abû 'Ayyûb al-'Anṣârî.[6]

The reports of course differ in matters of detail; but in general they agree on all the essential points. The gist of the reports is that one night the angel Jibrîl came to the Prophet and took him from the Ka'ba to Bayt al-Maqdis (Jerusalem), making him ride on a miraculous animal called *Burâq* which travelled at lightning speed. Already a number of the previous Prophets including Ibrâhîm, Mûsâ and 'Îsâ had been made to be present at Bayt al-Maqdis to welcome and greet the Prophet on his arrival there; and they did so. He then prayed with them there, leading them in the prayer. Thereafter Jibrîl ascended into the seven skies, taking the Prophet with him. At the first sky he was greeted and his prophethood affirmed by Adam, who was made to be present there. Similarly the Prophet was welcomed and greeted on the second sky by Prophets Yaḥyâ and 'Îsâ, on the third sky by Prophet Yûsuf, on the fourth sky by Prophet Idrîs, on the fifth sky by Prophet Hârûn, on the sixth sky by Prophet Mûsâ and on the seventh sky by Prophet Ibrâhîm (p.b. on them). After that the Prophet was taken still higher up to *Sidrat al-Muntahâ* which was covered by dazzling light. He was then shown some of the greatest and most wonderful "signs" of Allah, including the original form of Jibrîl and *al-Bayt al-Ma'mûr* in which each day a new group of seventy thousand angels entered for prayer. There he received three specific things from Allah — (a) the command to pray five times a day, (b) the revelation of the last couple of *'âyahs* of *surat al-Baqarah* and (c) an assurance that everyone of his followers (*'ummah*) would be rewarded with paradise if he did not commit the sin of *shirk* (associating partners with Allah) and was not guilty of grave sins (*kabâ'ir*). The Prophet was also shown paradise and hell and the samples of punishments that would be awarded to grave sinners like fornicators and the devourers of usury and of the properties of orphans. He was then brought back by Jibrîl in the same way, visiting Bayt al-Maqdis again on the return journey and from there to Makka, passing on the way by

1. *Bukhârî, n*os. 349, 1636, 3342.
2. *Bukhârî, n*os. 3886, 4710.
3. *Bukhârî, n*os. 3207, 3393, 3430, 3887; *Musnad,* IV, 207-210; *Nasa'î* Nos., 448-451.
4. *Musnad,* V, 387, 392, 394; *Ṭayâlisî,* no. 411.
5. *Musnad,* V, 143-144.
6. *Musnad,* V, 418.

a trade caravan who had lost an animal of theirs and of which the Prophet informed them. All these were completed during the night and the Prophet was back to his place at Makka before dawn.

It is reported that 'Umm Hânî', the Prophet's aunt, when she heard the account of the event from him, asked him not to relate his experiences to men for they sure would disbelieve and ridicule him.[1] The Prophet himself was well aware that such would inevitably be the case.[2] Yet he was determined to give out the truth. Accordingly in the morning he went to the Ka'ba compound and related his experiences. The campaign of disbelief and ridiculing was as usual led by 'Abû Jahl who gathered the Quraysh people round the Prophet and asked him to repeat the story to them. He did so. Instantly the crowd burst into disbelief and riduculing. Some were dumbfounded in astonishment. Even some Muslims are reported to have disbelieved the story and relapsed into their former state. 'Abû Jahl and his people thought that the story was so absurd that it would shake the faith even of 'Abû Bakr. So some of them went to him, told him the story and asked him whether he believed that strange tale. They were however sadly disappointed in their expectations. 'Abû Bakr very firmly told them that if the Prophet had related it, it must have been true, adding that he believed in far stranger things from him than this, that of his daily receiving news from the heaven and delivering it to the people. He then went to the Prophet, enquired of him whether he had said what was reported of him, and on his replying in the affirmative 'Abû Bakr instantly declared his belief in it. It was in consequence of this incident that the Prophet called him *Al-Ṣiddîq*, which has ever since been his distinctive title. The unbelievers did not leave the matter there, however. They demanded of the Prophet to give a detailed description of Bayt al-Maqdis if he had really been there. The Prophet started telling them the details, and as he did so Allah made Bayt al-Maqdis appear before his eyes so that he described it to the exact details.[3] The challengers were silenced, though they still obstinately refrained from believing.

There is a difference of opinions among the authorities regarding the date of this memorable event. While some suggest that it took place rather very early in the Prophet's mission, most of the authorities suggest dates ranging

1. Ibn Hishâm, I, 402.
2. *Musnad*, I, 309 (report of 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abbâs).
3. *Bukhâri*, no. 3886.

between two years and six months before the migration to Madina.[1] The context of *sûrat al-'Isrâ'* and the internal evidence of the reports on the subject unmistakably indicate that it took place rather late in the Makkan period of the mission. One very strong point is that the command to pray five times a day was definitely received during the *Mi'râj*; and since such five-time prayers were not performed during the life-time of Khadîjah (r.a.) who died late in the tenth year of the mission, the comamnd to do so, and therefore the *Mi'râj*, must have taken place after her death. On such considerations it is generally held that the *'Isrâ'* and *Mi'râj* took place either shortly before or shortly after the First 'Aqaba Pledge (12th year of the mission). As regards the exact date, the most widely accepted view is that it took place on the night of 27 Rajab.

II. SIGNIFICANCE AND IMPORTANCE

Indeed the *'Isra'* and *Mi'raj* were yet another special favour bestowed on the Prophet and another indication of his ultimate success given him by Allah following his visit to Ṭâ'if. The first of these encouraging indications was the deputing of the angel in charge of mountains to carry out the Prophet's wish with regard to his oppressors.[2] The second was the listening of a group of jinn to the Qur'ân and their acceptance of Islam.[3] The third and most important was the *'Isrâ'* and *Mi'râj*. And it is in the context of these encouraging signs and developments that the significance of the event becomes clear. The Prophet's mission and struggle was about to enter a very crucial and difficult phase requiring supreme sacrifices for the sake of Allah. Hence Allah specially prepared the Prophet for the task ahead by further steeling his convictions and showing him some of His Greatest Signs, thereby giving him further indications of the sure success that awaited him. Such special favours to Prophets at decisive junctures in their careers were only in consonance with the way of Allah — *sunnat Allah.* Thus was Prophet Ibrâhîm shown the "Kingdoms (secrets) of the heavens and the earth, in order to enable him to become one of those who have certitude" ﴿وكذٰلك نرىٓ إبرٰهيم ملكوت السمٰوٰت والأرض وليكون من الموقنين﴾.[4] Similarly Mûsâ

1. See for some discussions on the question of date Al-Qurṭubî, *Tafsîr,* X, 210; Al-Nawawî, *Sharḥ Muslim,* Pt. II, 209-210; Al-Shawkânî, *Tafsîr,* III, 207-208; *Zâd al-Ma'âd,* II, 49.

2. *Supra,* p. 810.

3. *Supra,* pp. 810-811.

4. Q. 6:75.

was shown some of Allah's greatest signs ﴿لنريك من ءايـتنا الكبرى﴾.[1] It must not be supposed that the Prophet's conviction and faith were any the weaker or incomplete before the *'Isrâ'* and *Mi'râj*. He had full and firm convictions and belief; but after these events his convictions were transformed, so to say, into practical knowledge and experience. Thus if he had hitherto believed and declared, on the basis of revelations received, that there are seven skies; he had now been enabled to see them with his own eyes. Hitherto he had spoken of the angels; he now saw them and some of their activities and assignments. He had been hitherto told of heavens and hell, of the resurrection of the dead, and of rewards and punishments. He was now enabled to view samples of all these facts. The certitude and practical knowledge which were thus implanted in him would make him face fearlessly and unhesitatingly the hazards of all the world and the enmity and ridicule of all the forces of opposition. It was this certitude and knowledge, coupled with conviction, which led him to disregard the affectionate advice of his aunt 'Umm Hânî' and his own awareness of the immediate consequences, and to declare fearlessly and unreservedly the experiences given him by Allah. Consider the situation. He was practically abandoned by his own clan. He had been rejected by the sister city of Ṭâ'if. He had been ousted from his own town and was continuing to stay there on the sufference of only one influential individual (Muṭ'im ibn 'Adîyy) who had given him personal protection. Under such a situation no person would ordinarily hazard giving out a personal experience of his which was sure to cause him further trouble and to give to the enemies a further point of disbelief and ridicule. Nor was the Prophet in any need at that juncture of time to making up and giving out such an apparently strange and absurd story, the more so because it was in no way calculated to gain an abatement of the opposition of his community, nor an accession of further converts to Islam. Yet the Prophet unhesitatingly gave out the account of his experience because what he had seen and learnt was no ordinary knowledge; it was no ordinary conviction. To suppress or deny the experience he had obtained was to deny and suppress his own existence and mission. It was this certitude and conviction which propelled him, in the face of sure capture and killing by the enemies, to say to 'Abû Bakr, "Be not afraid, Allah is with us". It was this faith and certitude that made him and his followers brave all the odds and face all the dangers in the cause

1. Q. 20:23.

of Allah.

This brings us to the second significance of *'Isrâ'* and *Mi'râj* which is also indicated in the Qur'ân, namely, to test the faith and attitude of men. So far as the Muslims were concerned, it was a test of their faith and of their obedience to the Messenger of Allah. 'Abû Bakr passed this test instantly and most creditably, while the other Muslims also passed it duly. The report of some believers having relapsed into disbelief on hearing the account is just in the fitness of things. The Prophet's mission and struggle was about to enter a decisive phase requiring supreme sacrifices on the part of his followers. It was therefore Allah's plan that the Prophet should now have round him only persons of unquestioned faith and unflinching devotion and obedience. And indeed the "Companions" who now stuck to him did pass the acid test of sacrificing their hearth and home, their kith and kin, their properties and earthly belongings and, above all, their own lives, for the sake of furthering the cause they had espoused. It was this quality of character and conviction, coupled with Allah's grace, that henceforth led them on to successes of which the starting point was the battle of Badr.

A third but no less profound significance of *'Isrâ'* and *Mi'râj* is that it symbolized, once and for all, the fact that the Prophet belonged to, and was the leader and final member of a community of Prophets whom Allah commissioned for the guidance of mankind; that the revelations which he received were in continuation and completion of the previous revelations and that Bayt al-Maqdis, like the Ka'ba, is a"blessed" spot (باركنا حوله) and another centre of attraction for the believers. The importance of the place thus emphasized was indeed given a practical shape by its fixation as *qiblah* (direction for prayer) for a fixed period.[1]

III. NATURE OF *AL-'ISRÂ' AND AL-MI'RÂJ*

The *'Isrâ'* and *Mi'râj* was a miracle which occurred exclusively to the

1. Exactly at what point of time Bayt al-Maqdis was taken for *qiblah* is not on record. The general belief that it was the "First of the two qiblas" - أولى القبلتين - is not correct. A report given by Ibn Isḥâq of course says that the Prophet used to pray between the two *rukns* (the Black Stone and the Yamanî corners), thus turning towards Syria (Bayt al-Maqdis) as well as facing the Ka'ba. The report is obviously an attempt to reconclie the known fact of Bayt al-Maqdis being for sometime the *qiblah* with the equally well-known fact that during his stay at Makka the Prophet did never turn his back towards the Ka'ba while praying or beseeching Allah's favour. But apart from this fact and the question of the authenticity of this report, it does not really say that the Prophet did so pray standing between the two corners always and =

Prophet and none else viewed it nor could have viewed and experienced it. It was because of this exclusively personal nature of the miracle that gave rise subsequently to various opinions regarding its nature. Mainly two views gained ground in the course of time. One view says that it took place in dream, while the Prophet was asleep; and the other view says that it took place spiritually, i.e., the Prophet's "spirit"or *rûḥ* was made to travel, his body did not travel. The evidence adduced in support of both the views will be noted presently. It must be emphasized at the outset, however, that both these views seem to emanate at bottom from a feeling that it is impossible or impracticable that the Prophet should have *physically* performed such a feat. If that is the feeling, then both the views border on disbelief. For the Prophet did not say that *he* did it. He said, and the Qur'ân says, that Allah did it, i.e., He took His servant one night etc. Hence the question of possibility or impossibility does not arise in the matter. Possibility and impossibility and, as Maudûdî points out, the restrictions of time and space apply to man, not to Allah.[1] To think that it is impossible for Allah to have caused something to happen is disbelief.

The "Dream Theory" seeks support in some statements in the reports relating to the subject , more specifically to a report attributed to Mu'âwiyah ibn 'Abî Sufyân (r.a.) and cited by Ibn Isḥâq.[2] It is said that when asked on the subject of *'Isrâ'* and *Mi'râj* Mu'âwiyah said that it was a "true dream" which Allah had shown the Prophet. (كانت رؤيا صادقة من الله). A further support is sought

= from the beginning to the end of his Makkan career. On the contrary, we have a number of authentic reports saying that the Prophet, before his migration to Madina, used to pray facing the Ka'ba, and that while praying in the *ḥijr* (*ḥatîm*), or at the *Maqâm* of Ibrahim, or near the *rukn* (Black Stone), or while praying at the down-town (*al-'abṭah*) or at Minâ. (See for instance *Bukhârî*, no. 3856; *Muslim*, nos. 1794 and 2473; *Musnad*, IV, 55; VI, 349 and Al-Ṭabarî, *Târikh*, II, 311 (I/1161-1162). In fact Bayt al-Maqdis appears to have been taken for *qiblah* either on the eve of, or simultaneously with the migration to Madina. Prior to that if the Prophet had ever turned his face in prayer to the Bayt al-Maqdis alone keeping the Ka'ba behind him, it would have instantly created an uproar and would have been a very fruitful point of criticism and opposition of the Quraysh leaders. Also, the importance and sanctity of the Ka'ba, enshrined in ageless tradition and reiterated in *sûrat al-Fîl* (105) and the call made to the Qyraysh to worship "The Lord of This House" ﴿فليعبدوا ربّ هذا البيت﴾ in *sûrat Quraysh* (106) preclude the possibility of relegating the Ka'ba in the backaround and taking Bayt al-Maqdis as the *qibla* at the early Makkan period of the mission. Bayt al-Maqdis was made the *qiblah* for a transitional and short period. The Ka'ba is the First and the Final *qiblah* of the Muslims.

1. Abul A'la Maudûdî, *Sîrat Sarwar-i-'Âlam*, II, Lahore, 1398/1978, p. 646.
2. Ibn Hishâm, I, 400.

in the Qur'ânic statement at 17:60 which uses the expression *ru'yâ* (رؤيا) in connection with the event. The protagonists of the dream theory take the expression *ru'yâ* here to mean dream. Similarly the "Spirit Theory" is traced to a reported statement by 'Â'ishah (r.a.), which is also cited by Ibn Isḥâq.[1] The latter says that someone of 'Abû Bakr's family told him that 'Âishah said that the Prophet's body was not taken out but only his *rûḥ* was taken out for *'Isrâ'* and *Mi'râj*. Ibn Isḥâq himself lent support to the dream and spirit theories by pointing out, not quite relevantly, that since a *waḥy* received by a Prophet in dream is as true as that received in a state of wakefulness, and since the Prophet said that though his eyes slept his heart (*qalb* قلب) did not, it is the same whether the *'Isrâ'* and *Mi'râj* took place in his dream or in his wakefulness. In whichever form it happened it is right and true.[2]

Thus does Ibn Isḥâq attempt to keep pace with the different views that obviously had been in circulation at his time. So far as the spirit theory is concerned, it appears to be also a by-product of ṣûfism/mysticism that penetrated the ranks of the Muslims by that time. Some people even attempted to be wiser than Ibn Isḥâq by suggesting a half-and-half solution, namely, by saying that the *'Isrâ'* from the Ka'ba to Bayt al-Maqdis took place in body (*bi-jasadihi* بجسده) but the *Mi'râj* from the latter place to the *sidrat al-muntahâ* took place in spirit (*bi-rûḥihi* بروحه).[3]

All these views are, however, wrong and untenable; for the simple reason that they run counter to the clear text and sense of the Qur'ân and the authentic traditions. The objections to the theories were very convincingly pointed out by Al-Ṭabarî who, as is his method, after having reproduced the reports in support of the different views on the subject, says that the dream and spirit theories are wrong on the following grounds. First, they run counter to the clear text of the Qur'ân. If it had happened in dream or in spirit Allah would not have said *'asrâ bi 'abdihi* (بعبده). Instead some such expression as *'asrâ bi rûḥihi* or *'asrâ fî manâmihi*, that is, made him travel in dream or in spirit would have been used. It is also unjustifiable to go beyond the direct wording of the text of the Qur'ân and to put an interpretation on it which violates its direct meaning. Second, if the *'Isrâ* and *Mi'râj* was a matter of dream or spirit, it would have been no evidence of prophethood,

1. *Ibid.*, 399.
2. *Ibid.*, 400. Ibn Isḥâq's expression is: (على أي حاليه كان: نائما أو يقظان كل ذلك حق، وصدق)
3. Mentioned in Al-Shawkânî, *Tafsîr*, III, 207.

nor any ground for the unbelievers and others to disbelieve and ridicule the Prophet, as by all accounts they did, for any person may see any type of strange dreams in sleep. Third, the mention of Burâq and other things in the reports clearly suggest physical transportation, not the transportation of *rûḥ*.[1] Fourth, the meaning of *ru'yâ* in 17:60 is 'seeing with one's own eyes', as Ibn 'Abbâs points out,[2] and also because the last clause of the *'âyah* states that this *ru'yâ* was made a test (*fitnah*) for men. Unless, therefore, the meaning here is physical viewing, it could not have been a test for the faith of anyone. Al-Ṭabarî therefore emphasizes that the *'âyah* 17:60 should be interpreted in conjunction with the first *'âyah* of the *sûrah* which speaks of the *'Isrâ'* and at both the places the experience spoken of is physical.[3] It may be added here that the *isnâd* of the report attributed to 'Â'ishah (r.a.) is unknown (*majhûl*) and on the basis of such defective *isnâd* the saying cannot be definitely ascribed to her. In any case, this report and also the reported statement of Mu'âwiyah (r.a.) are both opposed to the clear purport of the text of the Qur'ân and cannot be allowed to override it. The truth is that the *'Isrâ'* and *Mi'râj* took place physically and in the Prophet's wakefulness. It was not a matter of dream or spiritual experience. The grounds thus mentioned by Al-Ṭabarî are decisive and these have been reiterated, in one form or other, by subsequent scholars and commentators.[4]

IV. DID THE PROPHET SEE ALLAH?

Last but not least, reference should be made to the question whether the Prophet saw Allah during the *Mi'râj*. On this question too, like every other question relating to the Prophet's life and Islam, the decisive evidence is that of the Qur'ân. The first *'âyah* of *sûrat al-'Isrâ'* (17) says clearly that Allah made His servant travel by night in order to show him some of His Great signs ﴿لنريه من ءايـتنا الكبرى﴾. Similarly *'âyah* 18 of *sûrat al-Najm* (53), which is the other Qur'ânic reference to the occasion, states equally distinctly: "He indeed saw some of the greatest signs of his Lord ﴿لقد رأى من ءايـت ربه الكبرى﴾. Previously to this *'âyah* the *sûrah* mentions the Prophet's seeing the angel Jibrîl once in the high horizon and at a second descent near the *sidrat al-*

1. Al-Ṭabarî, *Tafsîr*, XV, 16-17.
2. *Ibid.*, 110;
3. Al-Ṭabarî, *Tafsîr*, XV, 113.
4. See for instance Al-Qurṭubî, *Tafsîr*, X, 208-209; Ibn Kathîr, *Tafsîr*, V, 40-41; Al-Shawkânî, *Tafsir*, III, 207.

muntahâ, which was at the time covered by "what covered it".[1] Thus both the relevant Qur'ânic passages uniformly state that the Prophet was shown some great signs of his Lord, which included the sighting of Jibrîl in his real form. Indeed if he had seen Allah, such a special fact would have been very distinctly stated in the Qur'ân, as is the fact of Allah's speaking to Moses mentioned very distinctly. Thus according to the Qur'ân the Prophet saw only some of the greatest signs of Allah, not Him as such.

The question has come up, however, on account of a number of varying reports that have come down to us. These reports fall into two distinct categories. One group of reports fall in line with the Qur'ânic information and are in fact an elucidation of it. They very distinctly state that the Prophet saw some of Allah's signs including Jibrîl in his original form. More importantly, the reporters, or most of them, mention that they asked the Prophet on the subject and they reproduce verbatim what he said in reply. Their *isnâd* is also unimpeachable. Conversely, the other group of reports seek to explain the above mentioned Qur'ânic references, more particularly the statements in *sûrat al-Najm*, in the sense that the Prophet saw his Lord. Though the *isnâd* of these reports is not questionable, they are at a number of disadvantages in comparison with the first group of reports. In the first place, they are at variance with the direct information of the Qur'ân and go beyond it. Secondly, they are at cross purposes with the first group of reports that are in no way less weighty. Thirdly, the reporters in the second category of reports do not say that they asked the Prophet on the matter, nor do they reproduce his exact words in reply. In fact this omission of reference to the Prophet makes the information given as merely the views of the reporters themselves. Fourthly, the reports in this latter group are themselves at variance with one another.

The most important of the reports in the first category is that of 'Â'ishah (r.a.) which has come down to us through a number of channels. The fullest version has it that Masrûq asked her whether the Prophet had seen Allah. She said that the question made her hair stand up. She then stated that whoever presumes that Muḥammad (ﷺ) saw his Lord is guilty of fabricating a grave lie against Allah. At this Musrûq sought an explanation from her of the Qur'ânic statememts 81:23, "He indeed had seen him in the clear

1. See *supra* pp. 439-445 for a detailed discussion on this passage.

horizon" ﴿ولقد رءاه بالأفق المبين﴾ and 53:13, "He had indeed seen him at a second descent" ﴿ولقد رءاه نزلة أخرى﴾. She said: "I was the first person of this nation to ask the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings of Allah be on him, about it. He said: 'He indeed is Jibrîl. I did not see him in the form he is created except on these two occasions. I saw him descending from the sky and his great form covering what is between the sky and the earth.'" Then she reminded Masrûq of the two *'âyahs,* 6:103 , "Eyes do not reach him, but He encompasses all eyes, etc" ﴿لا تدركه الأبصـر وهو يدرك الأبصـر....﴾ and 42:51, "It is not for man that Allah speak to him except by means of *waḥy* or from behind a veil, ..." ﴿وما كان لبشر أن يكلمه الله إلا وحيا أو من وراي حجاب...﴾[1]

Equally emphatic is the report of 'Abû Dharr (r.a.) who says: 'I asked the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be on him,"Did you see your Lord?' He said: 'Light! How could I see Him?'"[2] Another version coming through a different channel says that 'Abd Allah ibn Shafîq said to 'Abû Dharr: "If I had seen the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be on him, I would have asked him." 'Abû Dharr said: "On what would you have asked him?" Abd Allah ibn Shafîq said: "I would have asked him: 'Did you see your Lord?'" At this 'Abû Dharr said: "I indeed did ask him about it. He said, 'I saw light.'"[3] Similarly 'Abû Mûsâ al-'Ash'arî (r.a.) says that the Prophet said to them : "His (Allah's) veil is light. If he removed it, the glare of His Countenance would have burnt whatever of His creation that crosses His sight."[4] Again 'Abû Hurayrah (r.a.), in explaining 53:13 states that the Prophet saw Jibrîl.[5] To the same effect is the report of 'Abd Allah ibn Mas'ûd given in explanation of 53:9-10 and 53:17-18.[6]

Of the other category of reports the most important are those attributed to 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abbas (r.a.). One of these reports makes him say that the Prophet saw "him" with his heart.[7] In another version he says that the

1. *Muslim, n*o. 177; *Bukhârî,* Nos. 3234, 3235, 4855, 7380; 7351; *Musnad,* VI, 49-50, 230 241; Al-Ṭabarî, *Tafsîr,* XXVII, 50-51.

2. *Muslim,* No. 178 (i) The expression is: (قال: نور أنّى أراه) See also *Musnad,* V, 147.

3. *Muslim,* No. 178 (ii). The expression is: (قال: رأيت نوراً) See also *Tirmidhî,* no. 3282.

4. *Muslim,* No. 179. The expression is:

(حجابه النور لو كشفه لأحرقت سبحات وجهه ما انتهى إليه بصره من خلقه)

5. *Ibid.,* no. 175

6. *Ibid.,* no. 174.; *Bukhârî, n*os., 3232, 3233, 4856-4858; *Tirmidhî,* no. 3277, 3283; *Musnad,* I, 395, 397, 407.

7. *Muslim, n*o. 176 (i). The expression is: (قال رآه بقلبه)

Prophet "saw him twice with his heart".[1] It is noteworthy that these two reports of Ibn 'Abbâs do not in any way specify the object seen by the Prophet.[2] A third version coming through 'Ikrima and given by Tirmidhî states that Ibn 'Abbâs said the Prophet "saw his Lord".[3] Tirmidhî adds that this is a good but strange report.[4] Another version coming through 'Ikrima says that Ibn 'Abbâs stated: "The Prophet said: 'I have seen my Lord' ".[5] It is noteworthy how the two versions coming through the same 'Ikrima differ from one another, one attributing the statement to Ibn 'Abbâs, and the other making it a statement of the Prophet's. Another report coming through the same 'Ikrima makes Ibn 'Abbâs say: "Do you wonder that Allah favoured Ibrâhîm with His friendship (خلة), Mûsâ with His speech (كلام) and Muḥammad with His sight?"[6] A yet another statement of Ibn 'Abbâs's suggests that the Prophet saw his Lord in dream.[7] Again, another version of his reported statement says that the Prophet saw his Lord once with his heart, and on another ocacsion with his eyes.[8]

Besides these varying reports attributed to Ibn 'Abbas, two other reports in this category deserve mention. One is that of Muḥammad ibn Ka'b al-Quraẓî. It says that some persons asked the Prophet whether he had seen his Lord, and in reply he stated that he had not seen Allah with his eyes, but twice with his heart.[9] The other is the famous report of 'Anas ibn Mâlik on *'Isrâ'* in the course of which it is narrated that the Prophet went so near his Lord that there remained a distance of less than two bow-lengths between the two. This statement is generally regarded as a mixing up of two separate incidents, resulting from a confusion made most probably by a subsequent narrator.[10]

1. *Ibid.*, no. 176 (ii). The expression is: (قال رآه بفؤاده مرتين) See also *Tirmidhî*, no. 3281.

2. It is very strange that Ibn Kathîr (or the scribe/editor) inserts the word *rabbahu* (ربه) in the statement (رأى محمد ربه مرتين) and cites *Muslim* as authority (see Ibn Kathîr, *Tafsîr*, VII, 422. None of the two versions in *Muslim* contains the word *rabbahu* in the text.

3. *Tirmidhî*, No. 3279. The text is: (... عن ابن عباس قال رأى محمد ربه)

4. *Ibid.* The text is: (هذا حديث حسن غريب)

5. *Musnad*, I, 290.

6. Ibn Kathîr, *Tafsîr*, VII, 424.

7. *Ibid.*, 368.

8. Ṭabarânî, *Al-Mu'jam al-Kabîr*, XII, 220, *hadîth* no. 12941.

9. Al-Ṭabarî, *Tafsîr*, XXVII, 46-47; Ibn Kathîr, *Tafsîr*, VII, 424-425.

10. Ibn Kathîr, *Tafsîr*, VII, 422.

Thus the reports in the second category not only vary one from the other but they, as a whole, vary from the direct and clear statements in the Qur'ân and also from the statements in the first and the more weighty category of the reports. Hence the majority of the authorities are of the view, and this is the correct view, that the Prophet saw physically and with his eyes some of the greatest signs of his Lord, including His light which veiled Him, and Jibrîl in his real form for the second time.

CHAPTER XXXVII

PRELIMINARIES TO THE MIGRATION

I. THE FIRST HARBINGERS OF SUPPORT

It was the *ḥajj* season of the 11th year of the mission. The Prophet, in the course of his going round the camps of the various tribes seeking their help and support, came upon a group of people from Madina at 'Aqabah.[1] He enquired of them who they were. On their replying that they were of the Khazraj tribe of Madina he asked them whether they would sit and listen to him for a while. They agreed and sat with him. He then invited them to the worship of Allah Alone, explained Islam to them and recited to them some parts of the Qur'ân. These people were allies of the Jews who, as mentioned earlier, used to tell them that the time for the advent of a Prophet had drawn near and that they, with the help of that Prophet, would defeat and crush both 'Aws and Khazraj. When, therefore, the Prophet finished his talk these Madinites remarked among themselves that he was surely the Prophet of whom the Jews had spoken to them. Some of them even said to the others: "Let not the Jews steal a march on you and become the Prophet's followers before you." Thus talking among themselves they responded to the Prophet's call and embraced Islam. They then informed the Prophet saying: "We have left our people at home. There are no people among whom mutual jealousy, enmity and evil are more rife. Perhaps Allah will effect unity among them through you. We shall approach them and invite them to what you have asked of us and shall explain to them what we have responded to of this religion (*dîn*). So if Allah should unite them on this basis, then there will be no person more powerful than you."[2]

Although the report thus attributes the main reason for the Madinites' acceptance of Islam to what they had occasionally heard from the Jews about the appearance of a Prophet, it must not be supposed that they had not otherwise heard about him and about Islam previously to their meeting him at 'Aqabah; for news about him and about his message had already spread over all Arabia including Madina itself from where, as from other places, pilgrims and others had been visiting Makka throughout the previous dec-

1. At Minâ, near the First *Jamrah*.
2. Ibn Hishâm, I, 428-429; 'Abû Nu'aym, *Dalâ'il*, 298-299.

ade. They must not therefore have been unaware of the great upheavals that were taking place at Makka, including the boycott and blockade of Banû Hâshim by the other Quraysh clans, as a result of the Prophet's work there. Also persons like Swayd ibn Ṣâmit and 'Iyâs ibn Mu'âdh must not have remained completely silent about the Prophet when they had returned home after having met him. Thus the Madinites had already a vague knowledge of the Prophet and his mission from these sources as well as from the occasional remarks of the Jews. When therefore they met the Prophet personally and heard from him an exposition of Islam they were convinced of its truth and of him as Allah's Messenger.

A second thing to note about this report is what the Madinites lastly told the Prophet. It is clear from what they said, particularly the last clause of the report, that along with explaining Islam to them and calling them to the worship of Allah Alone, the Prophet had also sought their help and support in his task, as he indeed had been seeking from the other tribes. It was obviously in response to this part of the Prophet's conversation with them, which the report does not mention specifically, that the words, "then there will be no person more powerful than you", were spoken. Indeed another version of the report regarding this incident adds that the Prophet specifically sought their support so that he could deliver the message with which he had been entrusted by Allah. To this request the Madinites replied: "O Messenger of Allah, we are ready to struggle for the sake of Allah and His Messenger; but be it known to you that we (among ourselves) are enemies hating one another; and the battle of Bu'âth took place just about a year ago in which we killed one another. Hence if you come now, there may not be unity among us in respect of you. So let us return to our own men. Perhaps Allah may set our affairs right. Our appointment with you is the coming season (of *ḥajj*)."[1]

According to Ibn Isḥâq these harbingers of support were six in number. They were:

1. As'ad ibn Zurârah	of Banû al-Najjâr
2. 'Awf ibn al-Ḥârith	" "
3. Râfi' ibn Mâlik	of Banû Zurayq
4. Quṭbah ibn 'Âmir	of Banû Salimah

1. Ibn Sa'd, I, 218-219.

5. 'Uqbah ibn 'Âmir	of Banû Ḥarâm ibn Ka'b
6. Jâbir ibn 'Abd Allah	of Banû 'Ubayd ibn 'Adiyy.

On their return to Madina these people did indeed act according to their words. They spoke to their people about the Prophet and his affair so that there remained no family and clan among their people who did not discuss about him and Islam.[1]

According to another report the number of persons who met the Prophet at 'Aqabah on this first occasion was eight. They are: As'ad ibn Zurârah and Mu'âdh ibn Afrâ' of Banû al-Najjâr, Râfi' ibn Mâlik and Dhakwân ibn 'Abd Qays of Banû Zurayq, 'Ubâdah ibn al-Ṣâmit and 'Abû 'Abd al-Raḥmân (Yazîd ibn Tha'labah) of Banû Sâlim, 'Abû al-Ḥaytham ibn al-Tayyahân of Banû 'Abd al-Ashhal and 'Uaym ibn Sâ'idah of Banû 'Amr ibn 'Awf. Ibn Sa'd, who reproduces this report adds that Al-Wâqidî states that the list of six persons as given by Ibn Isḥâq "is to us the more trustworthy and it is the unaninmously accepted view."[2]

II. THE FIRST PLEDGE OF 'AQABAH

The six men proved true to their word and in the succeeding *ḥajj* season a group of 12 Madinan Muslims met the Prophet at 'Aqabah. Of them 10 were from the Khazraj and 2 were from the 'Aws tribe. They were:

1. As'ad ibn Zurârah	of Banû al-Najjâr
2. 'Awf ibn al-Ḥârith	" "
3. Mu'âdh ibn al-Ḥârith (brother of above)	" "
4. Râfi' ibn Mâlik	of Banû Zurayq
5. Dhakwân ibn 'Abd Qays	" "
6. 'Ubâdah ibn al-Ṣâmit	of Banû 'Awf ibn al-Khazraj
7. 'Abû 'Abd al-Raḥmân (Yazîd ibn Tha'labah)	" "
8. Al-'Abbâs ibn 'Ubâdah ibn Naḍlah	of Banû Sâlim
9. 'Uqbah ibn 'Âmir	" "
10. Quṭbah ibn 'Âmir	of Banû Sawâd ibn Ghanm (the above ten from Khazraj)

1. Ibn Hishâm, I, 429-430.
2. Ibn Sa'd, I, 218-219.

11. 'Abû al-Haytham ibn al-Tayyahân	of Banû 'Abd al-'Ashhal
12. 'Uaym ibn Sâ'idah	of Banû 'Amr ibn'Awf
	(the above two from 'Aws)

It may be noted that among these persons five were from among those who had met the Prophet in the Previous year (i.e., nos. 1,2,4,9, and 10). More important is the fact that there is no difference of opinion among the authorities about these 12 persons being present at 'Aqabah in that year and making the oath of allegiance to the Prophet. The terms of the Pledge, as recorded by one of the participants, 'Ubâdah ibn al-Ṣâmit, were that they undertook:

(1) Not to set any partner to Allah;

(2) Not to steal;

(3) Not to commit adultery and fornication;

(4) Not to kill their babes;

(5) Not to fabricate any libel against anyone;

(6) Not to disobey the Prophet in any lawful matter; and

(7) To obey him and follow him in ease as well as in difficulty.

If they fulfilled these obligations their reward would be paradise; but if they violated any of these and received punishment for it in this world, that would be counted as atonement for that offence. But if the offence remained unknown till the Day of Judgement, then Allah would punish or forgive as He wills.[1]

It should be noted that the Prophet required them first and foremost to worship none but Allah Alone and to reform their character and conduct. And it was on those conditions that he required them to obey him only in lawful matters. This First Pledge of 'Aqabah is generally referred to as the "Ladies Pledge" (*bay'at al-Nisâ'*) because the injunction for fighting in the cause of Allah had not yet been revealed and these were the usual terms for the *bay'at* taken from ladies.[2] After having made this pledge the twelve

1. This is a gist of the terms as mentioned in the various versions of the report. See for instance *Bukhârî,* nos., 18, 3892, 3893, 3999, 4894, 6784, 6801, 6873, 7055, 7199, 7213, 7468; *Muslim,* nos. 1709, 1809; *Musnad,* III, 441; IV, 119; V, 318, 319, 320, 321, 323, 324; *Nasâ'î,* nos. 4149-4153 4160, 4161, 5002; *Ibn Mâjah,* no., 2866; *Ṭayâlisî,* no. 579; Al-Bayhaqî, *Dalâ'il,* II, 436-437; Ibn Hishâm, I, 433-434.

2. See Q. 60:12.

Madinan Muslims returned to their homes. According to one report the Prophet sent with them Muṣ'ab ibn 'Umayr to teach them the Qur'ân and about Islam;[1] but another report has it that on their return to Madina the *'anṣar* sent a request to the Prophet to send them a suitable person to teach them the Qur'ân and the injunctions of Islam. Accordingly the Prophet sent Muṣ'ab ibn 'Umayr to do the work. Muṣ'ab was indeed the first person whom the Prophet sent outside Makka and within Arabia as a preacher of Islam And he indeed proved successful in the task he was entrusted with.

III. MUṢ'AB'S WORK AND THE SPREAD OF ISLAM AT MADINA

At Madina Mus'ab took his residence with 'Abû Umâmah As'ad ibn Zurârah and dedicated himself to the task he was assigned. He came to be known there as the "Qur'ân teacher (*Muqri'*) and used to lead the Muslims there in prayer.[2] Ibn Isḥâq has also a report that it was during this period that 'Abû Umâmah As'ad ibn Zurârah used to gather his fellow Muslims of Madina on Friday and hold the *jumu'ah* prayer in the quarters of Banû Bayḍâ'. Those who joined the first *jumu'ah* prayer numbered forty.[3] Obviously As'ad ibn Zurârah and Mus'ab the teacher must have done so under instructions from the Prophet who also must have received the order by that time to perform the *jumu'ah* prayer.

The above information shows also that the number of Muslims at Madina at that time had reached at least forty. Indeed the more important aspect of Mus'ab's work at Madina was the preaching of Islam among its people; and he performed this work creditably, assisted by As'ad ibn Zurârah and other Muslims. The most notable of his successes in this respect was the conversion of two leaders of Banû 'Abd al-'Ashhal, Sa'd ibn Mu'âdh and 'Usayd ibn Ḥuḍayr, and through them of most of their tribe (Khazraj). Ibn Isḥâq gives an account of this important incident which runs as follows:

One day As'ad ibn Zurârah and Mus'ab ibn 'Umayr went out to preach Islam and sat by the side of a well in a garden belonging to Banû Ẓafr, a branch of Banû 'Abd al-'Ashhal. They were soon joined there by a number of new Muslims. Information about this assemblage soon reached Sa'd ibn

1. Ibn Hishâm, I, 434.

2. Ibn Hishâm, I, 434; *Musnad*, IV, 284, 289; *Ṭayâlisî*, no. 704. 'Abû Nu'aym, *Dalâ'il*, 299.

3. Ibn Hishâm, I, 435; *Ibn Mâjah*, no. 1082; *Abû Da'ûd*, K. 2, b. 209.

Mu'âdh and 'Usayd ibn Ḥuḍayr who were till then polytheists and who were not well-disposed to the work As'ad and Muṣ'ab were doing at Madina. Hence Sa'd asked 'Usayd, who was with him at the time, to go to As'ad and Muṣ'ab and bid them to leave the place and never to attempt, in their words, to mislead their weak-minded people. Sa'd added that he would himself have gone there but that As'ad was his maternal cousin and he did not therefore like to quarrel with him directly on the issue. Accordingly 'Usayd took his lance and proceeded to the place in an agitated mood. Seeing him approach the spot As'ad whispered to Muṣ'ab saying that the person coming towards them was the leader of his people and therefore it would be of much good if he could be convinced of the truth of Islam. Muṣ'ab said that he would talk to him if he consented to sit with them for a while. On coming to the spot 'Usayd started abusing them and demanded to know what had brought them there and told them not to attempt to befool and mislead the innocent men of his tribe. He also asked them to leave the place instantly if they had any love for their lives. In reply to such stern words Muṣ'ab asked him with complete calm and composure whether he would like to sit and listen for a while and if he liked anything it was up to him to accept it; but if it was diagreeable to him in any way they would not like to do anything which he disliked and would be only ready to leave the place in no time. "Quite reasonable", remarked 'Usayd and after planting his spear in the ground sat down. Muṣ'ab then explained Islam to him and recited unto him some parts of the Qur'ân. Even before he finished his words he could realize from 'Usayd's countenance that a change had taken place in his mind. Indeed he was fully convinced of the truth of Islam. Hence when Muṣ'ab finished his recitation'Usayd simply expressed his admiration for what he had just heard and asked what should he do to be a Muslim. He was told that all that he neeeded doing was to take a bath, purify the clothes he wore, then utter the formula of monotheism and say two *raka'ahs* of prayer. 'Usayd did all these then and there and thus embraced Islam at the hand of Muṣ'ab. Not only that. He told Muṣ'ab and As'ad ibn Zurârah that he had left behind him another person who was a leader of his people and if he could be converted there would remain no person in the clan who would not embrace Islam. So saying he left the place promising to send Sa'd to them.

The change in 'Usayd was unmistakably reflected in his face. So when Sa'd saw him coming back in a different mood he remarked to those of his people who were around him: "By Allah, 'Usayd is coming back with a

countenance different from what he went with." 'Usayd had in the meantime hit upon an expedient to make Sa'd go to Muṣ'ab. Therefore as Sa'd asked him what he had done about the matter for which he had been sent he replied: "I have indeed spoken to the two men; and by Allah, I have not found any bad attitude in them. I asked them to refrain from what they were doing; and they said: 'We would do as you wish'. But it has so happened that Banû Ḥârithah have come out to kill As'ad ibn Zurârah because, as he is your maternal cousin, they want to harm and betray you thereby." Hearing this Sa'd's anger shot up. He instantly grasped the spear from 'Usayd's hand and proceeded to see and defend As'ad ibn Zurârah. On reaching the spot and finding As'ad and his companions safe and in a relaxed mood Sa'd realized that 'Usayd had purposely so manoeuvred to send him there that he might listen to them. With this realization he rudely asked them what business had brought them there, bidding them to leave the place in no time. Muṣ'ab politely asked him to sit down and listen, adding that if he liked anything he might accept it; and if he did not like it they would be only happy to withdraw. Indeed the same thing was repeated. Muṣ'ab explained Islam and recited some parts of the Qur'ân unto Sa'd. He was equally impressed, repeated the same acts and embraced Islam on the spot. As he came back to his people they made the same remark among themselves about him saying that he had returned with a countenance entirely different from what he had gone with. On coming to them he directly asked them what opinion they held about him. They replied in one voice that he was their noble and wise leader. Thereupon he told them that if that was the case, he would not speak to any man or woman of the clan until they embraced Islam. The report says that by the evening of the same day almost the entire clan of 'Abd al-'Ashhal embraced Islam, except some members of the family of 'Umayyah ibn Zayd.[1]

Even if the obviously dramatic touch given to the story and the ornamentation of the narration are discounted, there is no doubt that Sa'd ibn Mu'âdh and 'Usayd ibn Ḥuḍayr did embrace Islam at the instance of Muṣ'ab ibn 'Umayr and As'ad ibn Zurârah and that the two leaders of Banû 'Abd al-'Ashhal were in their turn instrumental in bringing about the conversion of most of the members of the clan to Islam. The account also gives a glimpse into the fact, which was only natural under the circumstances, that Muṣ'ab's

1. Ibn Hishâm, I, 435-438; Al-Bayhaqî, *Dalâ'il*, II, 238-240; 'Abû Nu'aym. *Dalâ'il*, 307-308.

work was not looked at with equanimity by all the quarters at Madina. Indeed one version of the account of Sa'd ibn Mu'âdh's conversion attributed to 'Urwah ibn al-Zubayr states that Muṣ'ab's success among Banû 'Abd al-'Ashhal created misgivings even among Banû al-Najjâr, As'ad ibn Zurârah's own clan, who turned against him and compelled Muṣ'ab to leave his house. Muṣ'ab then took his quarters with Sa'd ibn Mu'âdh and with his assistance continued the work of preaching and teaching of the Qur'ân.[1] The extent of the progress of Islam at Madina during less than a year's efforts by Muṣ'ab ibn'Umayr is well reflected in the fact that in the following *ḥajj* season more than seventy Madinan Muslims went on polgrimage and participated in the Second Pledge of 'Aqabah.

IV. THE SECOND PLEDGE AT 'AQABAH (13TH YEAR OF THE MISSION)

According to Ibn Isḥâq Muṣ'ab returned to Makka before the *ḥajj* season.[2] During the *ḥajj* season the Muslims of Madina came on pilgrimage to Makka with the others of their people who were till then polytheists. Naturally the Muslims did not disclose the fact of their appointment with the Prophet to their polytheist compatriots. When, on completion of *ḥajj*, the time for meeting the Prophet drew near the Muslims thought it wise to strengthen their rank by taking into confidence 'Abd Allah ibn 'Amr ibn Ḥarâm, one of the prominent leaders of Khazraj. They privately invited him to embrace Islam, telling him that since he was a nobleman and a leader of the community, they did not like that he should be fuel to hell-fire on his death. They also disclosed to him the fact of their appointment with the Prophet. The Muslims thus spoke to him obviously because they had noticed in him a disposition towards the truth. Indeed 'Abd Allah ibn 'Amr acceded to their invitation and embraced Islam.[3]

By his inclusion the number of Madinan Muslims in the *ḥajj* group became seventy-three. These seventy-three, together with two female Muslims, Nusaybah bint Ka'b (of Banû Mâzin ibn al-Najjâr) and Asmâ' bint 'Amr ibn 'Adiyy ibn Nâbî (of Banû Salimah) participated in the meeting at 'Aqabah (near the First or Great *Jamrah* at Minâ). Lest their polytheist fellow-citizens should come to know of their move, the Muslims went to bed as

1. Ibn Hishâm, I, 438.
2. *Ibid.*, 440-441.
3. *Ibid.*, 441.

usual with the others of their people in their respective camps. Then, when about one third of the night had passed and the others were deep asleep, they left their beds and silently went to the meeting place in small batches.

The Prophet came to the place at the appointed time accompanied by his uncle Al-'Abbâs ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib. He had not yet embraced Islam, but he wanted to witness the affair of his nephew and to be sure about the sincerity and earnestness of the *anṣâr*. At the meeting he was the first to speak. Addressing the Madinans he said that Muḥammad (ﷺ), as they knew, was living in honour and safety in his own birthplace and his clan had so far protected him; but as he now desired to join the Madinans he ('Abbâs) asked them to consider the matter carefully, reminding them that if they were sure about fulfilling their undertaking and defending the Prophet against his opponents, then they should shoulder the responsibility, but if they thought that they would be constrained to forsake him and surrender him to the enemies after he had joined them then it was better for them to leave him as he was. Scarcely had Al-'Abbâs finished his words than the *anṣâr* replied saying: "We have heard you". Then addressing the Prophet they said. "Speak, O Messenger of Allah, and take for yourself and for your Lord what you like." Thereupon the Prophet addressed them. He first recited from the Qur'ân, invited them towards Allah, inspired them with love for Islam and then said: "I want your pledge that you shall defend me as you defend your women and children."[1] At this Al-Barâ' ibn Ma'rûr grasped the Prophet's hand and said: "Yes, by Him who has sent you with the truth, we shall certainly defend you against what we defend our families and children against, for by Allah, we are men of war and possessors of arms that we have inherited as seniors from seniors (i.e. from our fathers and forefathers)."[2] At that point Al-Barâ' was interrupted by Abû al-Haytham ibn al-Tayyahân who, addressing the Prophet said: "O Messenger of Allah, there is a bond (of treaty) between us and the people (i.e. the Jews) and we are going to sever that bond. But when we did that and Allah made your affair prevail, would you then return to your own people and leave us?" At this the Prophet smiled and then replied: "Nay, my blood is your blood, my life is your life. I am of you, and you are of me. I shall fight those whom you fight against; and I shall make peace

1. *Ibid.*

2. Ibn Hishâm, I, 442; *Musnad*, III, 323, 339, 461-462; Al-Ṭabarâbî, *Al-Mu'jam al-Kabîr*, XIX, 89; Al-Haythamî, *Majma' al-Zawâ'id*, VI, 47. The text runs as follows:

(أبايعكم على أن تمنعوني مما تمنعون منه نساءكم وأبناءكم)

with whom you make peace with."[1] Then 'Abû al-Haytham turned towards his own people and reminded them that their taking the Prophet with them meant that all the Arabs would turn against them and would throw at them as if from one bow. If therefore they were sure that they would sacrifice their everything and would under no circumstances abandon the Prophet, then they should make the pledge and undertake the responsibility. All of them in one voice cried out that they would fulfil their pledge and would never abandon the Prophet.[2]

Others also spoke on the occasion. Thus As'ad ibn Zurârah addressed his people saying in effect what 'Abû al-Haytham had said reminding them of the responsibility they were about to undertake and of the sure enmity of the Arabs of which they would be the common target by their action.[3] Similarly, Al-'Abbas ibn 'Ubâdah ibn Naḍlah al-'Anṣârî addressed his people saying: "O peopel of Khazraj, do you realize on what are you going to pledge yourselves to this man?" They said; "Yes". Al-'Abbas ibn'Ubâdah then explained saying: "You are going to pledge yourselves for fighting the black and red of men. So if you think that you will give up when trouble descends on you destroying your property and killing your chiefs, then give up now. For by Allah, your doing so will be a loss in this world and also in the hereafter. But if you are sure that you shall fulfil your obligations, even if your properties are destroyed and your chiefs are killed, then undertake it. For by Allah, that will be the best for you in this world and in the hereafter." They all replied: "Surely we shall take it, even at the cost of our properties and chiefs." After this Al-'Abbâs ibn 'Ubâdah turned towards the Prophet and asked: "What will be our reward, O Messenger of Allah, if we fulfil our pledge?" The Prophet said: "Paradise". "Stretch then your hand", said the people. The Prophet did so, and they took their oath.[4]

From these brief glimpses of the proceedings of that momentous night meeting at 'Aqabah it should be clear that apart from Al-'Abbas ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib's obtaining the assurances and promises of the *'anṣâr*, they themselves very carefully considered and weighed the implications and consequences of their action. They understood full well that they were com-

1. *Ibid.*
2. 'Abû Nu'aym, *Dalâ'il*, 304, 309.
3. *Musnad*, III, 322-323, 339-340; Ibn al-Jawzî, *Al-Wafâ*, 231
4. Ibn Hishâm, I, 446; *Musnad*, III, 322.

mitting themselves to fighting and laying down their lives, and to sacrificing their properties and men, for the sake of the Prophet and Islam, when the need for doing so arose and when the Prophet required them to do so. On the other hand, the Prophet's commitments also were made very clear. He equally undertook to become one of them, to fight and shed his blood for their sake. Further, he promised that even when victorious and successful he would not leave them, nor would he return to his people and birth-place. Above all, the *'anṣâr* obtained from him an assurance of the reward of paradise if they faithfully fulfilled their part of the pledge. The Second Pledge of 'Aqabah was thus truly a mutual pledge in which both sides undertook a clearly stipulated set of obligations and made solemn promises. And on a balancing of the account it would appear that the *'anṣâr* did indeed make a very favourable and profitable bargain. They secured the life-long adhesion of the Prophet to them and the eternal bliss of heaven for them. And when the time for trials came they did indeed put these two things above all other considerations.

The reports vary as regards the first person to make the pledge at the Prophet's hand. Ibn Isḥâq says that the people of Banû al-Najjâr claimed that it was As'ad ibn Zurârah, those of Banû 'Abd al-Ashhal said that it was'Abû al-Haytham ibn al-Tayyahân, while the report of Ka'b ibn Malik, who was one of the participants in the Pledge, says that it was Al-Barâ' ibn Ma'rûr.[1] Indeed the reports variously give these names. Most probably the differences or confusion have arisen on account of the fact that these three persons were the ones who mainly spoke in the meeting, addressing both the Prophet and their own people, and in the process declared their acceptance of the obligations. The context as well as the background of the devlopments in Madina suggest that most probably As'ad ibn Zurârah was the first person to formally make the pledge at the hand of the Prophet. All the others then made it.[2]

The terms of the Second Pledge of 'Aqabah, so far as the *'anṣâr* were concemed and as they are known from the different reports may be summarized as follows:[3]

1. Ibn Hishâm, I, 447.

2. The two ladies made the *bay'ah* without holding the Prophet's hand. See *Bukhâri,* no. 5288.

3. See *Bukhâri,* nos. 7199, 7202; *Muslim,* no. 1841; *Musnad,* III, 322-323, 339-340, 441, 461; IV, 119-120; V, 314, 316, 318, 319, 321, 325; and al-Bayhaqî, *Dalâ'il,* II, 443, 452.

1. That they shall worship Allah Alone and shall not associate anything with Him.[1]
2. That they shall shelter and help the Prophet and his Companions (*muhâjirs*) when they migrate to Madina.[2]
3. That they shall defend the Prophet and his Companions as and against whomsoever as they (*the 'anṣar*) defended themselves, their families and children;[3]
4. That they shall bear the cost and financial obligations arising out of the above, whether it be easy or difficult for them.[4]
5. That they shall obey and follow the Prophet, in ease or in difficulty, and whether they liked it or not or whether it ran counter to their immediate interest.[5]
6. That they shall not dispute or contend with the lawful authority.[6]
7. That they shall exhort what is lawful and prohibit what is unlawful.[7]
8. That they shall, at all places and under all circumstances, speak out and uphold the truth and the cause of Allah, without fear of reproach or abuse.[8]

On the completion of the Pledge the Prophet asked the *'anṣâr* to select from among themselves 12 persons who would be lieutenants or leaders (*naqîb*) to look after and organize their affairs at Madina. So they selected 12 persons, nine from the Khazraj and three from the 'Aws tribe. They were as follows:

1. The expression is: (أسالكم لربي عز وجل أن تعبدوه ولا تشركوا به شيئا) (see for instance, *Musnad*, IV, 119-120)

2. The expression is: (أن تؤونا وتنصرونا / إذا قدمت يثرب) (See for instance *ibid;* also III, 340)

3. The expression is: (فتمنعوني مما تمنعون منه أنفسكم وأزواجكم وأبناءكم) (See for instance *Musnad*, III, 339-340)

4. The expression is: (والنفقة في العسر واليسر) (See for instance *ibid.*)

5. The expression is: (على السمع والطاعة في عسرنا ويسرنا ومنشطنا ومكرهنا والأثرة علينا) (See for instance *Musnad*, III, 441)

6. The expression is: (وأن لا ننازع الأمر أهله) (See for instance *ibid.;* also *Bukhârî*, no. 7199; *Muslim*, no. 1841)

7. The expression is: (وعلى الأمر بالمعروف والنهي عن المنكر) (See for instance *Musnad*, III, 322-323, 339-340)

8. The expression is: (وأن نقوم أو نقول بالحق حيثما كنا لا نخاف في الله لومة لائم) (See for instance *Bukhârî*, no. 7199; *Muslim*, no. 1841)

1. As'ad ibn Zurâra ('Abû Umâma)	of the Khazraj tribe
2. Sa'd ibn al-Rabî' ibn 'Amr	" "
3. 'Abd Allah ibn Rawâḥah ibn Tha'labah	" "
4. Râfi' ibn Mâlik ibn al-'Ajlân	" "
5. Al-Barâ' ibn Ma'rûr ibn Ṣakhr	" "
6. 'Abd Allah ibn 'Amr ibn Ḥarâm	" "
7. 'Ubâdah ibn al-Ṣâmit ibn Qays	" "
8. Sa'd ibn 'Ubâdah ibn Dulaym	" "
9. Al-Mundhir ibn 'Amr ibn al-Khunays	" "
10. 'Usayd ibn Ḥuḍayr ibn Simâk	of the 'Aws tribe
11. Sa'd ibn Khaythamah ibn al-Ḥârith	" "
12. Rifâ'ah ibn 'Abd al-Mundhir ibn Zubayr	" "[1]

The proceedings of the meeting were conducted with all secrecy and expedition, the Prophet even asking the *'anṣâr* to shorten their speeches lest their polytheist compatriots on the one hand and the Quraysh people on the other should come to know of them. Yet, it appears, a *satan* (either of men or of jinn) detected what was going on. From the top of a nearby hillock he shouted out at the top of his voice and addressing the Quraysh said: "O men of the camps, the despicable one (meaning the Prophet) and the apostates (*ṣubâh*, pl. of *ṣâbi*) have just agreed on warring against you." At this the Prophet told the *'anṣâr* that it was a *satan* of Minâ. Then directing his word to the *satan* he said: "O enemy of Allah, I shall, by Allah, deal with you." He then asked the *'anṣâr* to hasten back to their respective camps. They did so. At the time of departing, Al-'Abbas ibn Naḍlah addressed the Prophet saying: "By Allah who has sent you with the truth, if you so wish, we shall with our swords sweep down upon the men of Minâ (i.e. the Quraysh) in the morrow" The Prophet said: "We have not yet received the orders to do that." So they returned to their camps and slept for the rest of the night.[2]

The matter did not remain, however, a complete secret. In the morning the leading men of Quraysh came to the camps of the Madinites and charged

1. Ibn Hishâm, I, 443-444. The first seven names are given by Ibn Hishâm; the rest are given by Ibn Isḥâq. There is also some difference of opinion about the 12th person. Some mention him to be 'Abû al-Haytham ibn al-Tayyahân.

2. *Ibid.*, 447-448.

them saying: "It has come to our knowledge that you have come here to take out with you this our man from among us and that you have pledged yourselves to him for fighting us. By God, there are no people among the Arabs with whom we detest fighting more than with you." At this the unbelieving people of Madina were taken aback. They protested their innocence and swore by Allah that they knew nothing of the alleged affair. They were right; for they were really in the dark about the matter. The *'anṣâr,* however, exchanged meaningful glances with one another. After hearing such protestations of the Madinans, however, the Quraysh leaders, among whom was Al-Ḥârith ibn Hishâm ibn al-Mughîrah of Banû Makhzûm, left the place.[1]

The Quraysh did not leave the matter there. They made further enquiries about it and came to learn that it was a fact. In the meantime the pilgrims had left Minâ. Therefore a party of Quraysh people went out in hot pursuit of the *'anṣâr.* At a place called Adhâkir, which lies at about five miles from Makka, they came upon a party of the Madinans and succeeded in capturing Sa'd ibn 'Ubâdah and Al-Mundhir ibn 'Amr, both of whom were of the 12 *naqîbs.* Al-Mundhir succeeded, however, in overpowering his captors and escaped. Sa'd was taken a captive. His hands were tied to the neck and then he was dragged to Makka where he was beaten and tortured. An on-looker took pity on him and asked him whether there was anyone among the Quraysh with whom he had some acquaintance or understanding for mutual help and protection. Sa'd said that he knew Jubayr ibn Muṭ'im ibn 'Adiyy and Al-Ḥârith ibn Ḥarb ibn 'Umayyah whom he used to help and protect when they visited Madina on trade. The on-looker advised Sa'd to cry out for help by calling the two persons by their names. He did so. The Makkan individual then went to the two persons who were at the Ka'ba compound at the time and informed them that a Khazrajite named Sa'd ibn 'Ubâdah was being beaten and tortured at a particular place in the town and that he was calling them out for help. They recognized that he indeed used to protect them while at Madina. Hence they hurried to the spot, rescued Sa'd from his persecutors and let him return to his people.

V.THE SIGNIFICANCE AND NATURE OF THE SECOND 'AQABAH PLEDGE

Both in its immediate and far-reaching consequences the Second 'Aqabah Pledge may be regarded as the most important agreement ever con-

1. *Ibid.* 448-449.

cluded in the history of the world. It prepared the ground and provided the basis for the Muslims' and the Prophet's migration to Madina, the establishment of a bodypolitic there, the organization of the *muhajirs* and *'anṣâr* for defence, their ultimate victory over the forces of unbelief, the unification of all Arabia in the first instance and then of almost the entire ancient civilized world under one political system and, simultaneously, the onward march of Islam as an enlightening, civilizing and cultural force over the adjoining continents. No other treaty or agreement has proved to be so decisive and clear a turning point in the history of the world as a whole. The seventy-five men and women of Madina on the one hand, and the Prophet (accompanied by his uncle Al-'Abbâs ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib) on the other did indeed make history at 'Aqabah on that memorable night in 621-22 A.C.

The participants in that memorable act were quite aware of the implications of the agreement they made. The proceedings of the meeting and the speeches of the different persons show that they undertook the task and responsibilities with full knowledge and understanding of the shape of things to come. Such provisions of the agreement as required the *'anṣâr* to obey and follow the Prophet in ease and difficulty, to refrain from disputing and contesting the legally constituted authority and to lay down their lives and properties for the defence of the cause, all visualized the establishment of a bodypolitic. The provisions of the Second 'Aqabah Pledge were, so to say, the fundamental principles of the constitution of the subsequent state of Madina. No wonder, therefore, that a participant in that act, Ka'b ibn Mâlik, when old and blind, used to pride himself on being one of those who made the Pledge and to console himself over his having missed the battle of Badr by saying that to him participation in the Second Pledge of 'Aqabah was far dearer and more important than particicipation in the battle of Badr, though people talked more about the latter.[1] He was quite justified in his feeling.

In another respect the Second Pledge of 'Aqabah is unique in world history. No other historical agreement appears to have been carried out so fully, so faithfully and so willingly by both the parties to it. The *'anṣâr* cheerfully and ungrudgingly sheltered and gave quarters to the *muhâjirs*, shared their wealth and properties with the latter, fought and laid down their lives for the sake of Islam and the Prophet and did never deviate even a little from their promise of obeying and following him in ease and difficulty and even

1. *Bukhâri*, no. 3890.

against their own immediate interest. On the other hand the Prophet and the *muhâjirs* left their birth-place for good, adopted Madina and its people as their own land and brethren and did never return permanently to their birth-place even when the circumstances turned completely in their favour. Although the Prophet was undoubtedly sad when leaving Makka and never ceased sighing for it, he left it for ever, never to return there permanently. Even when visiting it on pilgrimage he did not consider it his residing place and emphasized this fact by performing the shortened prayer (*qaṣr*) there as prescribed for travellers from distant lands. The former Yathrib became for ever Madina (*Madînat al-Nabî*, City of the Prophet) not simply because he migrated there, nor simply because he made it the nucleus of the first Islamic state and the *terminus a quo* of the subsequent successes of Islam, but primarily because, according to the terms of the 'Aqabah agreement, he made it his own land, its people his own people — never leaving it and its people even when no more in need of them — and he lived there till the end of his life and lies buried there. What Madina is today in the world of Islam and in the heart of the Muslims is a direct result of the agreement at 'Aqabah.

Yet the agreement (Pledge) was made only verbally, not in writing. This is worth emphasizing. For the binding force behind both its conclusion and implementation was the power of faith and the dictates of conviction. When the '*anṣâr* told the Prophet at 'Aqabah: "Take (i.e. stipulate) O Messenger of Allah, for yourself and for your Lord whatever you like", it signified only the extent of their conviction, their dedication to Islam and their determination to undertake the hardest of obligations for its sake. It also means that the Second Pledge of 'Aqabah was the effect of the initial success of Islam at Madina, not the cause of it; though in its turn it proved to be the starting point for further successes of Islam.

One of the participants in the Pledge, 'Ubâdah ibn al-Ṣâmit, characterizes it as the 'Pledge For Fighting' (*bay'at al-ḥarb*).[1] So does Ibn Isḥâq who adds that this was so because the Prophet had by then received permission for fighting.[2] This latter statement is not correct. Permission to fight was given after the migration, as the *'âyahs* 22:39-40 containing that permission clearly indicate. These say: "Permission (to fight) is given to those who are being warred against....... who have been driven out of their homes" etc.

1. Ibn Hishâm, I, 454; *Musnad*, V, 320.
2. Ibn Hishâm, I, 454.

Clearly the permission came subsequently to their having been driven out of their homes, i.e., after their migration. This is proved also by the Prophet's reply to Al-'Abbâs ibn 'Ubâdah ibn Naḍlah's overenthusiasm to start fighting the Quraysh immediately after the conclusion of the Pledge, which Ibn Isḥâq also notes.[1] The Prophet said: "We have not yet received orders to do that."[2] This does not mean, however, that 'Ubâdah ibn al-Ṣâmit's characterization of the Second 'Aqabah Pledge as the "Pledge for Fighting" is not correct. It indicates and emphasizes the nature of the obligation the participants undertook and their complete awareness of that. They clearly knew it and indicated it in their speeches that their taking the Prophet in their midst meant facing the hostility and attack not only of Quraysh but of the other Arabs as well; and that therefore they should be ready to fight and sacrifice their lives and properties for the sake of Islam and the Prophet. The Prophet also repeatedly asked them to consider thoroughly the consequences of the step they were about to take and to be prepared for defending him and his companions (تمنعوني). The Second Pledge of 'Aqabah was thus really a pledge for fighting in defence of the Prophet and Islam. It was essentially a defensive pact.

VI. REASONS FOR ISLAM'S SUCCESS AT MADINA

It has been stated above that the Second pledge of 'Aqabah was an effect of the initial success of Islam at Madina. As regards the reasons for this success, the first and foremost is Allah's special favour upon the Madinites. For, guidance emanates from Allah and it appears that it was His design that Madina should be the base for the success of Islam.

As regards the worldly reasons, the foremost is what 'Â'ishah (r.a.) pointed out while referring to the effects of the Bu'âth war. She stated that the Bu'âth war was in the nature of Allah 's preparing the ground for the acceptance of Islam and the Prophet at Madina. For, as a result of the war, most of the leaders of 'Aws and Khazraj were killed and the two tribes emerged from the war completely exhausted and divided.[3] Indeed they were in dire need of starting their life anew on a new basis of amity and peace and under a common and wise leader. Islam provided the new basis and the Prophet appeared to them to be the God-sent and natural leader to lead them to a life

1. Ibn Hishâm, I, 454.
2. *Ibid.* See also *supra* p. 849; *Musnad,* 1, 216 (report of Ibn Abbâs).
3. *Bukhârî*, nos. 3847, 3930.

of peace and unity.

A third reason was the existence of the Jews at Madina. It worked in two ways. On the one hand, the Jews themselves used to talk about the imminent appearance of a Prophet whom they would follow and with whose help they would eliminate the 'Aws and the Khazraj from Madina. Naturally this created an inquisitiveness among the latter about the coming Prophet. As already indicated,[1] this natural inquisitiveness on their part was one of the reasons for their acceptance of Islam when some of them met the Prophet for the first time at 'Aqabah. On the other hand, the Jews used to exploit the 'Aws and the Khazraj financially by means of a widespread and extortionate net-work of usury and also to play the one tribe against the other. Both the tribes had at last come to see through this game of the Jews and had grown determined for emancipation from the vicious circle of exploitation. For the same reason the two tribes were unwilling to unite themselves under the leadership of the Jews or of anyone of their protégés. Islam provided the means for that emancipation and the Prophet provided the much-needed common leadership. Thus, if the corruption and perversion of Allah's revelations effected by the Jews and the Christians of the time in general provided the background for the rise of Islam, the financial exploitation and political machiavellism of the Jews of Madina paved the way for the phenomenal success of Islam among its non-Jewish inhabitants.

In this connection reference should be made to the claim often made by Judaeo-Christian writers that the monotheism of the Jews had predisposed the 'Aws and the Khazraj towards the monotheism offered by Islam. The claim is as specious as is the claim that Islam owes its origin to Judaeo-Christian influences. Indeed the former plea is only an extension of the latter. The precepts and practices of the Jews of Madina repelled rather than attracted the non-Jewish population towards Judaism. If the monotheism of the latter had in any way appealed to them, there would have been some noticeable inclination among them towards it in the years immediately preceding the rise of Islam or the Prophet's migration to Madina. The sources do not, however, give that impression.

A fourth factor in Islam's success at Madina may be found in the nature and temperament of the people of the place. Just as the climate of the place differs from that of Makka, so also its inhabitants, in contrast with those of

1. *Supra*, pp. 837-838.

Makka, are by nature more mild and accommodative. This distinction between the nature and temper respectively of the two places and their peoples are discernible even today. Naturally, therefore, Islam received a more sympathetic and intelligent reception at Madina.

Last but not least, as one writer points out,[1] the main factors that account for the Makkan opposition to Islam were totally absent in Madina. One of the foremost reasons for the Makkan leaders' opposition to Islam was their jealousy and pride born mainly out of their familiarity with the Prophet. He was one of their own men born and brought up amidst them. Hence the Makkan elders looked upon him with that natural jealousy which familiarity breeds. They could not just make themselves accept the leadership and guidance of one who was only a junior member of their society and of whom they, by virtue of seniority in age and blood-relationship, expected only obedience and subordination, and whom they did not think in any way entitled to supersede the elders in leadership and command. This natural cause of opposition was simply absent in Madina. Secondly, the Makkan elders constituted a priestly class whose social primacy and financial interests were bound up with the maintenance and continuance of the system of religious rites and worship that had grown round the Ka'ba. Islam and the Prophet posed a direct threat to that vested interest. It was this priestly class, the elders, who had mainly organized the opposition at Makka. At Madina there was no such priestly class of leaders with vested interest to guard against any threat to it. Hence the Prophet and Islam found there a rather ready acceptance.

When all this is said, however, it must not be overlooked that it was the inherent quality of Islam and its teachings, and the character and personality of the Prophet which, above everything else, impressed the Madinans most.

1. Akram Khân, *Mustafâ Charit,* (Bengali text), 4th revised edn. Dhaka, 1975, pp. 473-475.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

THE MIGRATION TO MADINA

I. CAUSES AND NATURE OF THE MIGRATION

The Second 'Aqaba Pledge prepared the ground for the Muslims' as well as the Prophet's migration to Madina. The 'Aqaba Pledge was indeed the outcome of at least three years of the Prophet's efforts to find support and a suitable base for his work of propagating the truth with which he had been entrusted by Allah and for which purpose he had been approaching the tribes outside Makka. Similarly the migration to Madina of both the Muslims and the Prophet was effected with careful plans and preparations. It was no sudden act done on the spur of the moment, nor carried out haphazardly to avoid an unexpected emergency. For sometime past it had become clear to the Prophet as well as to the Muslims that they must look elsewhere for support and for a base of work; and the primary consideration all through had been to further the cause of Islam. Neither the approach to the tribes nor the migration to Madina were steps taken solely or primarily for the Prophet's personal safety, nor at all for furthering his own interest and ambition. Nothing illustrates this fact more clearly than his refusal to accept Ṭufayl ibn 'Amr al-Dawsî's proposal to him to secure himself in the strong fortress of the Daws tribe where there were strong men to take care of his defence.[1] It should also be recalled that he had also refused the offer of help by some tribes just for gaining and sharing with them the political power over Arabia as a whole.[2] The migration to Madina was not simply a migration in the geographical sense of moving out from one place to another, nor a measure of political strategy or personal safety. The guiding spirit and the overriding consideration was to serve the cause of Allah and of Islam. It has therefore been very aptly characterized in the Qur'ân as well as in the tradition as a "migration to Allah and His Messenger" (*hijrah ilâ Allah wa rasûlihi*).

The nature and purpose of the migration explain also its underlying cause. The Muslims and the Prophet migrated to Madina because it was no longer feasible or possible for them to practise and propagate Islam at Makka. In other words, the sole cause of the migration was the Quraysh leaders' opposition to Islam. The nature and aspects of that opposition have

1. *Muslim*, no. 116; *Musnad*, III, 370.
2. See *supra*, pp. 815-817.

been discussed in a previous chapter.[1] It may only be pointed out here that the Qur'ân and the traditions, while referring to the migration, allude at the same time to its causes too. Thus the Qur'ân specifically mentions as the causes of the migration that the Muslims were:

(a) oppressed on account of their faith (*ẓulimû* ظُلموا);[2]

(b) jeopardized in their faith (*futinû* فُتنوا), i.e., they were reduced, by hook or by crook, into a situation of either verbally recanting or not being able to practise Islam;[3]

(c) persecuted and driven out (*'ûdhû* أوذوا and *'ukhrijû* أخرجوا).[4]

The reports confirm and supplement these statements about the causes of the migration by saying that while the Prophet was disbelieved and driven out of his home, the Muslims were oppressed, persecuted, jeopardized in their faith and driven out of their homes and property.[5]

It may be recalled that a few years earlier a number of Muslims had migrated to Abyssinia. The migration to Madina, however, differs from the Abyssinian migration in a number of ways. In the case of the migration to Abyssinia the Prophet was concerned mainly or solely for the safety of the early Muslims and their faith. He advised them to betake themselves there pointing out distinctly to them that there they would get both personal safety and freedom for practising their faith. He himself did not plan to leave Makka obviously because he had till then not been despaired of it and expected to bring about its conversion by continuing to work there. In the case of migration to Madina the situation was completely different. The Prophet had found that there was no more chance of making further progress for Islam or of coninuing his work at Makka. Moreover, his people had then definitely abandoned and ousted him. Hence he sought for a new base from where he could discharge the duty imposed on him. He not only thought of going to that place but also of making it the centre of his unfinished work. Hence, secondly, he prepared the ground first by inviting the people of his desired place of migration to embrace Islam and, when some of them did so,

1. See Chapter XV.
2. 16 (*al-Naḥl*): 41 = ﴿ والذين هاجروا فى الله من بعد ما ظلموا... ﴾
3. 16:110 = ﴿ ... للذين هاجروا من بعد ما فتنوا... ﴾
4. 3 ('Al *'Imrân*): 195 = ﴿ ...فالذين هاجروا وأخرجوا من ديـٰرهم وأوذوا فى سبيلى... ﴾ and 59 (Al-*Ḥashr*): 8= ﴿ ... المهـٰجرين الذين أخرجوا من ديـٰرهم وأموالهم... ﴾
5. See for instance *Bukhârî*, nos. 3900 and 3901; Ibn Hishâm, I, 467.

he further prepared the field by sending a sutiable person to teach and propagate Islam there in order to get a sizeable number of persons over to the faith. In the case of the migration to Abyssinia no such preliminary work was done, because there was no plan on the Prophet's part to go there himself and make that place the base for his work. Thirdly, and arising out of the last mentioned fact, the Prophet, as the final stage of preparation, came to a definite understanding and concluded a clearly termed pledge with the Muslims (*'anṣâr*) of Madina whereby he himself undertook to go over to them and remain with them as long as he lived, and they undertook to obey the injunctions of Islam and sacrifice their everything for the sake of Allah and His Messenger. No such prior agreement or pledge was made with any party of the Abyssinians because the nature and purpose of the Muslims' migration there were totally different. The migration to Madina was the result of a bilateral and mutual agreement; that to Abyssinia was simply a unilateral seeking of refuge by a group of persecuted people who had suffered for conscience's sake. Last but not least, and also arising out of the last mentioned fact, the migration to Abyssinia was temporary in nature. There was no objection to the emigrants' returning to Makka and indeed in the course of time they did all return from there. The migration to Madina, on the other hand, was permanent in nature, in that neither the Prophet nor the other *muhâjirs* did return to Makka permanently. The subsequent conquest of Makka was no victorious coming back as such. There was no retaking possession of the houses and properties left at the time of the migration.

II. MIGRATION OF THE COMPANIONS

When the preliminary work was over the Prophet, according to Ibn Isḥâq, pointed out to the Muslims saying: "Allah the Mighty and Glorious has provided for you brethren (in faith) and a home where you would find security".[1] It is also on record that the Prophet had previously been shown in dream the place of migration which was full of date palms and which he now recognized to be Madina.[2] On receiving the Prophet's instructions the Muslims, including those who had returned from Abyssinia, started migrating to Madina in batches. The Prophet did not migrate first, but saw to it that his companions accomplished their migration peacefully and safely, and awaited Allah's specific directive to himself for leaving Makka.

1. Ibn Hishâm, I, 468.
2. *Bukhârî*, no. 3905.

According to Ibn Isḥâq[1] the first person to migrate to Madina was 'Abû Salamah ('Abd Allah) ibn Asad of Banû Makhzûm. He had previously migrated to Abyssinia but had returned to Makka. His clan, however, renewed their persecution upon him so that as soon as he came to know of the acceptance of Islam by a number of people of Madina he started for migrating there. This was, as Ibn Isḥâq puts it,"a year before the 'Aqabah Pledge". Obviously his reference here is to the Second 'Aqabah Pledge. It would thus appear that 'Abû Salamah migrated to Madina almost immediately after the conclusion of the first 'Aqabah Pledge.

'Abû Salamah's migration, however, was no peaceful affair. His wife 'Umm Salamah (subsequently *'Umm al-Mu'minîn*) gives a very touching account of the event. She states that as soon as her husband started for Madina taking her with him and making her ride on a camel with her child on her lap, her parental relatives obstructed the way and told 'Abû Salamah that though he was free to betake himself wherever he liked, they would not allow him to take their daughter away with him. So saying they in fact forcibly snatched her away from her husband. At this turn of the event 'Abû Salamah's parental relatives intervened, not quite in his support, but rather against the other party. They told 'Umm Salamah's relatives that they could take their daughter with them but they had no right to the child who was their son ('Abû Salamah's parental relatives) and therefore belonged to them. They then forcibly took the child from the other party. 'Umm Salamah states that in the process of dragging by the two parties the joint of one arm of the child was displaced. Thus, at the point of their departure for Madina the three members of the small family were separated from one another by their own blood relations. Thus separated from his child and wife 'Abû Salamah alone went to Madina. 'Umm Salamah states that she remained separated from her husband and child for about a year. During that period she used every day to go to the spot where she had been separated from her husband and child and to sit there weeping till evening. At last one of her relatives took pity on her and requested the others to let her go to her husband. Similarly her husband's relatives also relaxed their attitude and returned the child to her. Then taking the child with her she started for Madina all alone, riding on a camel. When she arrived at Tan'îm, some five miles from Makka, 'Uthmân ibn Ṭalḥah ibn 'Abî Ṭalḥah of Banû 'Abd al-Dâr happened

1. Ibn Hishâm, I, 468.

to meet her. He recognized her and on coming to know that she was proceeding to Madina all alone he considered it too desperate on her part and too beneath his manliness to allow her so to proceed alone. He therefore volunteered to lead her to Madina. He then caught the rope of her camel and so led and accompanied her all the way to Qubâ' in the vicinity of Madina where her husband was staying. 'Umm Salamah states that 'Uthman ibn Ṭalḥah treated her with due respect and courtesy and that she had never come across such a noble and honest person.[1]

It should be mentioned here that a report of Al-Barâ' ibn 'Âzib (an *'anṣârî*) says that the first persons "to come to us" were Muṣ'ab ibn 'Umayr and Ibn 'Umm Maktûm who used to teach the *'anṣâr* the Qur'ân. They were followed by Bilâl, Sa'd, and 'Ammâr ibn Yâsir. Then came 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭâb with twenty others, after which the Prophet arrived at Madina.[2]

So far as Muṣ'ab ibn 'Umayr is concerned it has been seen before[3] that after the first 'Aqabah Pledge he was commissioned by the Prophet to teach to *'anṣâr* the Qur'ân and to preach Islam at Madina. He returned to Makka, however, before the conclusion of the Second 'Aqabah Pledge and then migrated to Madina when, after its conclusion, the Prophet advised the Muslims to do so. Most probably the above mentioned report refers either to Muṣ'ab's first sojourn at Madina as a Qur'ân teacher and preacher or to his migration there as the first person after the conclusion of the Second Pledge of 'Aqabah. 'Abû Salamahs case is different in that he migrated to Madina, as Ibn Isḥâq specifically mentions, a year before the 'Aqabah Pledge. And since he did not return to Makka, Ibn Isḥâq's statement that he was the first person to migrate is substantially correct. It would also appear from the above mentioned report that Ibn 'Umm Maktûm also worked for sometime along with Muṣ'ab as Qur'ân teacher for the *'anṣâr.* In all likelihood this was after the Second 'Aqabah Pledge. As regards 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭab and his group of *muhâjirs* it is definite that they migrated after the Second 'Aqabah Pledge and therefore after 'Abû Salamah. So did Bilâl, Sa'd, 'Ammâr and the others. 'Umar himself gives a rather detailed account of his migration which Ibn Isḥâq reproduces and which will be noticed presently.

1. *Ibid.*, 469-470. 'Uthmân ibn Ṭalḥah was at the time an unbeliever. He embraced Islam after the treaty of Ḥudaybiyah and migrated to Madina along with Khâild ibn al-Walîd. He attained martyrdom at the battle of Ajnâdayn.

2. *Bukhârî*, nos. 3924, 3925.

3. *Supra*, pp. 841-844.

After the arrival of the first *muhâjir* at Madina four persons from among the *'anṣâr* went to Makka. They were Dhakwân ibn 'Abd Qays, 'Uqbah ibn Wahb, Al-'Abbâs ibn 'Ubâdah ibn Naḍlah and Ziyâd ibn Labîd. They subsequently returned to Madina along with the different batches of *muhâjirs* from Makka. For this reason these four persons were known as *Muhâjirî Anṣârî*.[1] This fact shows that the process of migration was completed with perfect coordination with the *'anṣâr*.

According to Ibn Isḥâq, the next person after 'Abû Salamah to migrate to Madina was 'Âmir ibn Rabî'ah, a confederate of Banû 'Adiyy ibn Ka'b. He went with his wife Laylâ bint 'Abî Ḥathmah ibn Ghanm of the same clan. They were followed by the Jaḥsh family and the other members of Banû Ghanm ibn Dûdân, confederates of Banû 'Umayyah ibn 'Abd Shams. In fact all members of Banû Ghanm ibn Dûdân, men, women and children, went in a body taking with them whatever of their belongings they could carry and leaving their homes a deserted place. The group included, of men, 'Abd Allah ibn Jaḥsh ibn Ri'âb, his brother 'Abû Aḥmad ('Abd ibn Jaḥsh), 'Ukâshah ibn Miḥṣin, Shujâ' ibn Wahb, 'Uqbah ibn Wahb, Arbid ibn Ḥumayyirah (or Ḥumayrah), Munqidh ibn Nabâtah, Sa'îd ibn Ruqaysh, Muḥriz ibn Naḍlah, Yazîd ibn Ruqaysh, Qays ibn Jâbir, 'Amr ibn Miḥṣin, Mâlik ibn 'Amr, Safwân ibn 'Amr, Thaqf ibn 'Amr, Rabî'ah ibn Aktham, Al-Zubayr ibn 'Ubayd, Tammâm ibn 'Ubaydah, Sakhbarah ibn 'Ubaydah and Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allah ibn Jaḥsh. Of the ladies there were Al-Far'ah bint 'Abî Sufyân ibn Ḥarb (wife of 'Abû Aḥmad), Zaynab bint Jaḥsh (wife of Zayd ibn Ḥârithah, later on *'Umm al-Mu'minîn)*, 'Umm Ḥabîb bint Jaḥsh (wife of 'Abd al-Raḥmân ibn 'Awf), Ḥamnah bint Jaḥsh (wife of Muṣ'ab ibn 'Umayr), Judâmah bint Jandal, 'Umm Qays bint Miḥṣin, Umm Ḥabîb bint Thumâmah, 'Âminah bint Ruqaysh and Sakhbarah bint Tamîm.[2]

The migration of all these people naturally turned their homes into a deserted place. It is related by Ibn Isḥâq that once 'Utbah ibn Rabî'ah, Al-'Abbâs ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib and 'Abû Jahl happened to pass by the place. Looking at the empty houses 'Utbah sighed and regretfully remarked that the homes of Banû Jaḥsh had become a deserted place. At this 'Abû Jahl remarked tauntingly, pointing to Al-'Abbâs, "This is the work of this our brother's son. He has caused divisions in our society, brought about diffe-

1. Ibn Sa'd, I, 226.
2. Ibn Hishâm, I, 470-472.

rences in our affairs and has separated us, one from the other."[1]

The next mentionable group of companions to migrate to Madina was that led by 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭâb. It is related that he was accompanied by some twenty persons from among his family, relatives and others. Ibn Isḥâq gives 'Umar's own story of the event. It says 'Umar, 'Ayyâsh ibn 'Abî Rabî'ah and Hishâm ibn al-'Âṣ ibn Wâ'il agreed among themselves that they would meet together in the following morning at a place called al-Tanâdub, about ten miles from Makka; and if any of them failed to turn up by the agreed time, it would be assumed that he had been caught and detained. So the other two would proceed without him towards Madina. In the following morning 'Umar and 'Ayyâsh ibn 'Abî Rabî'ah turned up at the spot in time, but Hishâm ibn al-'Âṣ ibn Wâ'il was detained and could not come up. Hence 'Umar and 'Ayyâsh, with the others of the group, left for Madina. On their arrival there they stayed with the people of Banû 'Amr ibn 'Awf at Qubâ'. Shortly afterwards 'Abû Jahl ibn Hishâm and his brother Al-Ḥârith ibn Hishâm arrived at Qubâ' for the purpose of luring 'Ayyâsh back to Makka; for he was their uterine brother as well as paternal cousin. They told him that their mother had been so upset at his migration that she had vowed not to comb her hair nor to take shelter from the sun till her son 'Ayyâsh returned to Makka. They therefore asked him to go back to Makka just for once to see his mother and thus enable her to release herself from her vow. 'Ayyâsh was moved at the story and consulted 'Umar, telling him that he ('Ayyâsh) liked to go to Makka just temporarily for the sake of his mother as well as to bring his wealth which he had hastily left there. 'Umar saw through 'Âbû Jahl's game and warned 'Ayyâsh not to step into the trap, adding that his mother would get over the shock in the course of time and would start living a normal life. 'Umar further said that if it was the question of money he had enough with him and he would give half of what he had to 'Ayyâsh. The latter was, however, overpowered by his affection for his mother and insisted on going back. At last 'Umar gave one of his strongest camels to 'Ayyâsh, asking him to travel on that animal and advised him that if he detected any bad faith on his companions' part he would be able to hurry back to Madina on that camel and they would not be able to overtake him with their camels. 'Umar's fears proved quite true. For, as they went some way towards Makka, 'Abû Jahl deceived 'Ayyâsh into getting down

1. *Ibid.*, 471.

from his camel and then the two overpowered him, tied him, took him a captive to Makka and kept him confined there. Ibn Isḥâq adds that when they reached Makka it was daytime and 'Abû Jahl, addressing the onlookers, said: "Thus have we done with our fool; so you all should do like this with your fools."[1] Subsequently, however, Hishâm ibn al-'Âṣ ibn Wâ'il escaped and came to Madina on receipt of a letter from 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭâb. This was, however, after the Prophet's migration there.[2] Similarly 'Ayyâsh ibn 'Abî Rabî'ah also succeeded in escaping and returning to Madina along with some others at a subsequent date.[3]

The details of migration of the other prominent companions like Ḥamzah ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, 'Uthmân ibn 'Affân, 'Uthmân ibn Maẓ'ûn, 'Abd al-Raḥmân ibn 'Awf, 'Abû Ḥudhayfah ibn 'Utbah ibn Rabî'ah and others are not known. Most probably they succeeded in accomplishing their migartion without any untoward event. On the whole, almost all the companions of the Prophet succeeded in migrating to Madina except those who were detained and persecuted by the Quraysh leaders or were incapacitated by their personal difficulties or other circumstances. These people, together with the Prophet,'Abû Bakr and 'Alî ibn 'Abî Ṭâlib remained to migrate.[4] One of those who migrated clearly after the Prophet was Al-Zubayr ibn al-'Awwâm who, together with a few other Muslims, had been away to Syria on a trade journey and who, on their return journey, met the Prophet on the way when he was migrating to Madina.[5] Most probably they had left for Syria before the Prophet issued instructions to the Muslims to migrate to Madina.

Similarly Ṣuhayb ibn Sinân also migrated after the Prophet. It is reported that when Ṣuhayb started for Madina the Quraysh people obstructed him saying that since he had originally come to their city as a poor man and had thereafter made a considerable fortune by trading there, they would not allow him to escape with his wealth. They indeed misjudged the depth of Ṣuhayb's faith; for he immediately asked them whether they would allow him to depart if he surrendered to them all his wealth and possessions. They

1. *Ibid.*, 474-475.

2. *Ibid.*, 475-476.

3. *Ibid.* See also *Bukhârî*, no. 4560 and *Fatḥ al-Bârî*, VIII, 74-75. The story given by Ibn Hishâm (I, 476) of Al-Walîd ibn al-Walîd's adventure in rescuing the two from Makka is not correct, for Al-Walîd ibn al-Walîd embraced Islam after the battle of Badr.

4. Ibn Hishâm, I, 480; Ibn Sa'd, I, 226.

5. *Bukhârî*, no. 3905.

agreed to do so. Thereupon Ṣuhayb surrendered to them his wealth and valuables, including his savings of gold and thus procured his release from their hands. When he arrived at Madina and the Prophet came to know of this he remarked that Ṣuhayb had indeed made a very profitable deal.[1] It is further reported that the Qur'ânic passage 2:207, "Those of men who sell themselves seeking Allah's pleasure, etc.", was revealed with reference to Ṣuhayb and the others like him who sacrificed their material interests for the sake of migrating to Allah and His Messenger.[2]

No less bright were the examples of sacrifice made by the *'anṣâr* and their generosity to the *muhâjirs*. They were received with all care, cordiality and preparation. They were provided with suitable quarters to stay in and with all the immediate necessaries of life. For that purpose the *'anṣâr* distributed the *muhâjirs* among themselves, each playing host to as many as his means allowed him to do. Sometimes they drew lots to decide who of the *muhâjirs* should go to whom. This they did not because there was any unwillingness on anyone's part to share the responsibility but because they vied with one another for playing hosts to the *muhâjirs*. 'Umm al-'Alâ', an *'anṣârî* lady, states that when the lot was drawn, it fell to her family to take in 'Uthmân ibn Maẓ'ûn. They did so; but he soon fell ill and died shortly afterwards.[3]

Ibn Isḥâq has preserved for us an account of the distribution of the *muhâjirs* among the *'anṣâr*. Though not comprehensive, the information given by him illustrates how orderly and systematic a way in which the *muhâjirs* were received at Madina.[4] The information may be tabulated as follows:

Muhâjirs	*Hosts*
(a) 'Abû Salamah ibn 'Abd al-Asad 'Âmir ibn Rabî'ah 'Abd Allah ibn Jaḥsh 'Abû Aḥmad ('Abd ibn Jaḥsh)	(a) Mibshar Ibn'Abd al-Mundhir ibn Zanbar of Banû 'Amr ibn 'Awf, at Qubâ'.
(b) 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭâb	(b) Rifâ'ah ibn'Abd al-Mundhir ibn

1. Ibn Hishâm, I., 477.
2. See for instance Ibn Kathîr, *Tafsîr*, I, 360.
3. *Bukhâri*, no. 3929.
4. Ibn Hishâm, I, pp. 47:, 476-480.

Muhâjirs	*Hosts*
Zayd ibn al-Khaṭṭâb (brother of the above) 'Amr ibn Surâqah ibn al-Mu'tamar 'Abd ibn Surâqah ibn al-Mu'tamar (brother of above) Khunays ibn Ḥudhafah al-Sahmî ('Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭâb's son-in-law, husband of Ḥafṣah, subsequently *'Umm al-Mu'minîn)* Sa'îd ibn Zayd ibn 'Amr ibn Nufayl Wâqid ibn 'Abd Allah al-Tamîmî Khawlâ ibn Abî Khawlâ Mâlik ibn Abî Khawlâ 'Iyâs ibn al-Bukayr 'Âqil ibn al-Bukayr 'Âmir ibn al-Bukayr Khâlid ibn al-Bukayr (with their confederates of Banû Sa'd ibn Layth) 'Ayyâsh ibn 'Abî Rabî'ah	Zanbar, of Banû 'Amr ibn 'Awf, at Qubâ'.
(c) Ṭalḥah ibn 'Ubayd Allah ibn[1] 'Uthmân Ṣuhayb ibn Sinân	(c) Khubayb ibn 'Isâf, of Banû Balḥârith ibn al-Khazraj, at al-Sunḥ (modern 'Awâlî locality of Madina)
(d) Ḥamzah ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib Zayd ibn Ḥârithah Abû Marthad Karnâj ibn Ḥiṣn Marthad al-Ghanawî (son of above) 'Anasah 'Abû Kabshah (Salîm)	(d) Kulthum ibn Hidm, of Banû 'Amr ibn 'Awf, at Qubâ'. (According to another saying they stayed with Sa'd ibn Khaythamah)

1. According to another saying Ṭalḥah stayed with As'ad ibn Zurârah of Banû 'Abd al-'Ashhal.

Muhâjirs	*Hosts*
(e) 'Ubaydah ibn al-Ḥârith ibn al-Muṭṭalib Ṭufayl ibn al-Ḥârith (brother of above) Al-Ḥusayn ibn al-Ḥârith Misṭaḥ ibn 'Uthâthah ibn 'Abbâd Swaybit ibn Sa'd ibn Ḥuraymlah Ṭulayb ibn 'Umayr Khabbâb ibn al-Aritt	(e) 'Abd Allah ibn Salamah, of Banû Bal'ajlân, at Qubâ'.
(f) 'Abd al-Raḥmân ibn 'Awf, with a party of other *muhâjirs.*	(f) Sa'd ibn al-Rabî', of Banû Balhârith ibn al-Khazraj, at Qubâ'.
(g) Al-Zubayr ibn al-'Awwâm 'Abû Sabrah ibn Abî Ruhm	(g) Mundhir ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Uqbah ibn 'Uḥayḥah, of Banû Jahjabâ, at al-'Usbah
(h) Muṣ'ab ibn 'Umayr ibn Hâshim	(h) Sa'd ibn Mu'âdh ibn al-Nu'mân, of Banû 'Abd al-'Ashhal.
(i) 'Abû Ḥudhayfah ibn 'Utbah ibn Rabî'ah Sâlîm (servant of the above) 'Utbah ibn Ghazwân ibn Jâbir	(i) 'Abbâd ibn Bishr ibn Waqsh, of Banû 'Abd al-'Ashhal.
(j) 'Uthmân ibn 'Affân	(j) 'Aws ibn Thâbit ibn al-Mundhir (brother of Ḥassân ibn Thâbit) of Banû al-Najjâr.
(k) A group of bachelor *muhâjirs*	(k) Sa'd ibn Khaythamah

It should be noted that this distribution did not remain constant but changed from time to time. Others who are not mentioned here were understandably distributed similarly among the *'anṣâr.* The facts noted above illustrate, in the first place, that the migration was carried out in a planned, organized and coordinated way. It was no haphazard flight, though the very fact of leaving their birth-place, their hearth and home and, in most cases, the major part of their properties and possessions entailed on the *muhâjirs* no inconsiderable dislocation and hardships. The presence of at least four of the

'*anṣâr* at Makka, who had come all the way from Madina, during the early phase of the migration, is only indicative of the coordination between Makka and Madina in this respect. Secondly, though the *muhâjirs* left Makka as silently and as carefully as possible, their departures could not just be kept a secret from their adversaries. For the departure of whole families and in a number of cases the desertion of entire homes could not be kept unobserved by their neighbours. Thirdly, and arising out of this fact, the Quraysh leaders, as they came to know of the movement, attempted to prevent the migration from taking place. This was only natural on their part; but the very nature of the movement imposed certain insurmountable obstacles in their way. They could and did indeed obstruct, capture, detain and persecute those whom they could; but they could not simply have stopped everyone from going; for the Muslims left mostly in small groups, at unspecified hours and over a period of not less than two months. Hence the Quraysh leaders could have prevented the migration only if they could place the city virtually in a state of blockade, closing and effectively guarding all the exits from it for as long as there remained the possibility for the Muslims to migrate. The geographical features of Makka and its prevailing social conditions rendered the adoption of such a preventive measure on the Quraysh leaders' part out of the question. Moreover, sometimes the Muslims moved out in such a sizeable group as would enable them to defend themselves not only against wayside bandits but also against the motley of opponents the Quraysh leaders could hastily muster. The report given by Ibn Hishâm of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭâb's challenging anyone to face him and obstruct his migration may or may not be correct; but it was no easy matter for the Quraysh leaders, naturally demoralized by a sense of their aggressivenss and highhandedness towards their own kinsmen, to face and obstruct such a determined group of youths inspired by the force of their conviction and ready to lay down their lives for the sake of the truth they had embraced. The Muslims' migration to Madina was thus carried out in spite of the Quraysh leaders' knowledge of it and in spite of their isolated cruel attempts to prevent it.

III. THE PROPHET'S MIGRATION: (A) THE LAST ATTEMPT TO KILL HIM

As a last resort the Quraysh leaders concentrated their attention on the Prophet, and that for two obvious reasons. In the first place, if they could not control or prevent the migration of the Muslims in general, who were their own men scattered in all the clans and families, they could at least keep an

effective watch against one person and prevent his going. Secondly, they understood full well that the concentration of the Muslims at Madina would pose a threat to the Quraysh if only the Prophet migrated there and joined them. Hence the Quraysh leaders were determined to prevent this from happening.

Ibn Isḥâq gives some details of the Quraysh leaders' manoeuvres in this respect. He says that as they saw that the Muslims had found a secure place of resort for them they realized the gravity of the situation and the imminence of the Prophet's migration to Madina. Hence they decided to meet in a conference at the famous Dâr al-Nadwâ in the vicinity of the Ka'ba to decide on the course of action to be taken with regard to the Prophet. It was to be a close-door and secret meeting in which none but the Quraysh leaders and persons in whom they had complete confidence were to be admitted. Ibn Isḥâq clearly mentions that some non-Quraysh people, obviously those who were in league with the Quraysh leaders, also attended the conference. It is further stated that a *satan* in the from of an old and experienced Najdi *shaykh* also sought and was given permission to attend the conference. This person played a conspicuous role in the proceedings of the conference. Of the Quraysh leaders who were present in the meeting Ibn Isḥâq makes special mention of 'Utbah ibn Rabî'ah, Shaybah ibn Rabî'ah and 'Abû Sufyân ibn Ḥarb representing Banû 'Abd Shams; Ṭu'aymah ibn 'Adiyy, Jubayr ibn Muṭ'im ibn 'Adiyy and Al-Ḥârith ibn 'Âmir representing Banû Nawfal ibn 'Abd Manâf; Al-Naḍr ibn al-Ḥârith of Banû 'Abd al-Dâr; 'Abû al-Bakhtarî ibn Hishâm, Zam'ah ibn al-Aswad ibn al-Muṭṭalib and Ḥakîm ibn Ḥizâm representing Banû Asad ibn 'Abd al-'Uzzâ; 'Abû Jahl of Banû Makhzûm; Nubayh ibn al-Ḥajjâj and Munabbih ibn al-Ḥajjâj, both brothers and of Banû Sahm; and 'Umayyah ibn Khalaf of Banû Jumaḥ.[1]

Several proposals were made and discussed in the conference. One of the leaders proposed to capture the Prophet, tie his hands and feet with iron chains and then to keep him confined without food and drink so that he would die the death of the poets of old like Zuhayr and Nâbighah. This proposal was opposed, mainly by the above mentioned Najdî *shaykh*, who pointed out that no sooner would the Prophet be thus confined than the news of it would escape by the back-door of the house in which he would be confined and then his followers would rescue him from their hands by any means. So this proposal was dropped. A second proposal was that the Prophet should

1. *Ibid.*, 481.

be expelled and driven out of Makka, it mattered not whither he went; for if he left the city it would be relieved of the trouble he had brought on it. This proposal too was vetoed by the Najdî *shaykh*. He pointed out that the proposed measure would be tantamount to courting the same trouble which was sought to be avoided. For the Prophet, with his argumentative and sweet words, and above all with his amiable personality and character, would win over the people of whichever place he went to and would then come with those people against the Makkans. Accordingly this proposal too was set aside. Finally 'Abû Jahl put forward the proposal to do away with the Prophet altogether. He suggested that from each clan a strong and courageous man should be selected and each should be given a razor-sharp sword with which all should strike the Prophet simultaneously, as if the blow of one man, and thus kill him. Thus would the blood-guilt be distributed equally upon all the clans so that it would be impossible for Banû Hâshim to fight with each and every Quraysh clan and they would ultimately be constrained to accept blood-money which would be paid them by the other clans. This proposal was strognly supported by the Najdî *shaykh* and it was adopted by the conference.[1]

The Qur'ân clearly refers to such plans and manoeuvres of the Quraysh leaders in 8:30 which runs as follows:

﴿وإذ يمكر بك الذين كفروا ليثبتوك أو يقتلوك أو يخرجوك ويمكرون ويمكر الله والله خير الماكرين﴾(٨ : ٣٠)
(سورة الأنفال)

"And (remember) when those who disbelieved conspired against you — to keep you in confinement, or to kill you, or to drive you out. They design; and Allah also designs. Verily Allah is the best of designers."(8:30)

Two aspects of the Quraysh leaders' secret conference need a closer look at. The first is the presence of Muṭ'im ibn 'Adiyy's son Jubayr and brother Ṭu'aymah in the conference. This fact shows that the protection given to the Prophet after his return from Ṭa'if some three years previously by Muṭ'im, leader of Banû Nawfal, was no longer operative. Muṭ'im was not yet dead; he died about seven months before the battle of Badr.[2] Most probably due to old age he had allowed his son and brother to step into his position as leader of the clan.[3] In any case, Jubayr ibn Muṭ'im and his clan Banû Nawfal were

1. *Ibid.*, 480-482; Ibn Sa'd, I., 227.

2. Ibn Hishâm, I., 483-484; *Musnad*, I, 348; Al-Ṭabarî, *Tafsîr*, IX, 227-230; Ibn Kathîr, *Tafsîr*, IV, 49.

3. '*Usd a-Ghâbah*, I, 271.

now aligned with the Quraysh opposition and the Prophet was no longer under the protection of Banû Nawfal. Yet he continued to stay at Makka and for at least a couple of years had been in a position to conduct his negotiations with the tribes and the people of Madina. This fact brings us to the second aspect of the proceedings of the secret conference, namely, the anxiety of the leaders, particularly of 'Abû Jahl, to avoid the inevitable vengeance of Banû Hâshim by making the blood-guilt fall equally upon all the clans. Indeed there seems to have been no difference of opinion as to whether the Prophet should be killed or not. The only diffculty to be resolved was how to neutralize the vengeance of Banû Hâshim. This means that at that point of time the latter had not quite abandoned the Prophet. There is no doubt, however, that shortly after 'Abû Ṭâlib's death when 'Abû Lahab had emerged as the leader of the clan they had forsaken the Prophet so that he was obliged to seek support and protection at Ṭâ'if. It would thus appear that the respite afforded by Muṭ'im ibn 'Adiyy's protection enabled the other members of Banû Hâshim who were favourable to the Prophet like Ḥamzah, 'Al-Abbâs and 'Alî to get over the clan to disapproving 'Abû Lahab's policy and to reasserting their protection for the Prophet. In fact such resumption of Banû Hâshim's responsibility explains the end of Muṭ'im ibn 'Adiyy's protection which was either withdrawn or surrendered on the basis of a mutual understanding. For the spirit of gratitude with which the Prophet subsequently remembered Muṭ'im's help does not admit of any assumption of bad faith on his part. Banû Hâshim's resumption of their duty to protect the Prophet explains not only the end of Muṭ'im's protection, it also explains the Prophet's continued stay at Makka till his migrations, Al-Abbâs ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib's accompanying him in his visits to the camps of some of the tribes seeking their support, particularly his presence at the Second Pledge of 'Aqabah and, above all, the failure of the Quraysh leaders to do away with the Prophet openly though there was no dearth of eagerness on their part to kill him.

(B) "VERILY ALLAH IS WITH US"

On his part the Prophet, on the departure of most of his companions for Madina, had been waiting for Allah's definite directive for him to migrate; while 'Abû Bakr, seeing that the Quraysh leaders' opposition and pressure

2. It was Muṭ'im's son Jubayr who pleaded with the Prophet for the Badr prisoners when he made his remark that if Muṭ'im were alive and asked for the release of the prisoners they would have been released for nothing.

upon him were increasing daily, sought the Prophet's permission for him to migrate. The Prophet asked him to wait, adding that Allah might arrange for a good companion for him.[1] The clear indication was that the Prophet liked to have him as his companion in the migration. Yet, to be sure, 'Abû Bakr enquired of the Prophet whether he expected Allah's permission for him too to migrate. He replied that he did. Therefore 'Abû Bakr waited. In fact he had been preparing himself for the migration even since before the conclusion of the Second 'Aqabah Pledge; for it is on record that he had been specially feeding and maintaining two good camels for the purpose for at least four months prior to his migration with the Prophet early in Rabî' I of the 14th year of the mission.[2]

As soon as the Quraysh leaders hatched their conspiracy to kill the Prophet he was informed of it by Allah. Indeed an allusion to this fact is contained in the last clause of *'âyah* 8:30 which states: "And Allah is the best of designers". The plain meaning of this statement is that Allah knew best how to deal with the conspiracy of the evil ones, that He was keeping a watch on their manoeuvres and that it was His plans, not their conspiracy, that were to prevail. It is reported that no sooner had the Quraysh leaders dispersed from their secret conference than Jibrîl came to the Prophet and informed him of their proceedings and asked him not to sleep that night in his own bed.[3] Jibrîl also communicated to the Prophet Allah's permission for him to migrate. According to Ibn 'Abbâs this divine permission for the Prophet to migrate is contained in 17:80.[4]

The remaining few hours were understandably the time for finalizing the plans and preparations that the Prophet and 'Abû Bakr had naturally been making for sometime in expectation of the permission for migrating. The details are not on record but the accounts of the actual process of the migration as given by 'Abû Bakr, 'Â'ishah and Surâqah ibn Ju'shum (r.a.), all directly involved in the process, enable us to identify the main aspects of the plans and preparations made in this respect. These are: (a) 'Abû Bakr's specially feeding and maintaining two good camels for the purpose for at least four months prior to the date of the migration; (b) an agreement with 'Abd Allah ibn Urayqiṭ of Banû al-Du'il ibn Bakr who, notwithstanding his being

1. Ibn Hishâm, I, 480; *Bukhârî,* nos. 3905, 4068.
2. *Ibid.,* also *Bukhârî,* no. 2138.
3. Ibn Hishâm, I, 482; Ibn Sa'd, I, 227.
4. *Mustadrak,* III, 3; *Musnad,* I, 223. The text is:

﴿وقل رّب أدخلنى مدخل صدق وأخرجنى مخرج صدق واجعل لى من لّدنك سلطـنـا نّصيرا﴾

an unbeliever and in friendly relations with Banû Sahm, was a man of trust and who undertook, for some consideration given to him, to take charge of the two animals on the eve of the migration, to bring them to the Prophet and 'Abû Bakr at the appointed place and hour, to act as guide for them through the unchartered and infrequented part of the way to Madina which the Prophet planned to take and which, obviously, was not known to him nor to 'Abû Bakr and, above all, to keep all these arrangements a complete secret; (c) the selection of the cave of Thawr, a few miles to the south-west of Makka and therefore not in the direction of Madina to which all searching eyes would naturally and immediately turn, as the place where to hide themselves till the heat of the Quraysh's anger and pursuit was over; and (d) the instructions given to 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abû Bakr and 'Âmir ibn Fuhayrah, the first to stay at Makka during day-time to keep a track on the Quraysh leaders' deeds and words and report them to his father and the Prophet at dead of night; and the second, 'Âmir, to shepherd 'Abû Bakr's goats during daytime in the vicinity of the cave, thus obliterating the traces of the Prophet's and 'Abû Bakr's foot-steps to the hill on the one hand, and to supply them with milk from the goat at night on the other, and then to return to Makka — both to perform their duties in such a way as would not excite the other Makkans' suspicion or inquisitiveness about their movements. Needless to say, such plans and preparations could not have been completed on the spur of the moment or within a few hours. They were doubtless thought out and settled well in time, though they were finalized shortly before departure from Makka. It may also be supposed that 'Abd Allah ibn Urayqiṭ was not told about the cave to begin with but was subsequently informed through 'Abd Allah ibn Abû Bakr where and when he (Urayqiṭ) was to be present with the animals ready to set out for the journey. For Ibn Isḥâq very emphatically states that none knew about the Prophet's departure for the cave except 'Abû Bakr, his family and 'Alî.[1]

The Quraysh leaders also acted according to their plans; but with the disadvantage that they did not know that their schemes were known to the Prophet. According to their plans their select band of assassins lay in wait at night outside the Prophet's house, ready to strike at him.[2] Ibn Sa'd, on the authortty of Al-Wâqidî and his chain of narrators, gives the names of the assassins who thus waited in ambush for the Prophet. There were 12 per-

1. Ibn Hisham, I, 485.
2. *Ibid.*, 483; Ibn Sa'd, I, 228.

sons, namely, 'Abû Jahl, Al-Ḥakam ibn 'Abî al-'Âṣ, 'Uqbah ibn 'Abi Mu'ayṭ, Al-Naḍr ibn al-Ḥârith,'Umayyah ibn Khalaf, Ibn al-Ghayṭalah, Zam'ah ibn al-Aswad, Ṭu'aymah ibn 'Adiyy, 'Abû Lahab, 'Ubayy ibn Khalaf, Nubayh ibn al-Ḥajjâj and his broter Munabbih ibn al-Ḥajjâj.[1] It is further stated that they intended to enter the Prophet's house and strike at him but they could not decide who should be the first to enter and strike at him.[2] Hence they waited outside for the Prophet to come out early in the morning.

The Prophet also acted strictly in accordance with the advice given him by Jibrîl. He instructed 'Alî to sleep in his (the Prophet's) bed, covering himself with the Ḥadramauti blanket which the Prophet used to sleep in, so that anyone peeping into the house would suppose that the Prophet was sleeping there. 'Alî was also advised to pay up to their respective owners, when the Prophet was away, whatever of their properties and belongings they had deposited with him.[3] For, in spite of all that had happened the people of Makka in general still regarded him as the trusted one and used to deposit their valuables with him for safe custody. Thus making all the necessary arrangements the Prophet gave the assassins a slip.

Exactly when and how the Prophet left his house is differently reported, which is perhaps indicative of the perfect secrecy with which he made his departure from Makka. So far as the report of 'Abû Bakr which has come down to us is concerned, it traces the story only from the point of their departure from the cave of Thawr.[4] The next most authentic report, that of 'Â'ishah (r.a.), speaks of the Prophet's going to 'Abû Bakr's house at the unusual hour of mid-day, disclosing to the latter of Allah's permission for him (the Prophet) to migrate and of other matters including their departure for the cave of Thawr, without specifically mentioning whether the Prophet returned to his house after having spoken to 'Abû Bakr or remained at the latter's house till night. It is clear from her account, however, that they both betook themselves to the cave of Thawr on the night following that very day.[5] A third report, given by Al-Wâqidî on the basis of his chain of nar-

1. *Ibid.*
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.;* also Ibn Hishâm, I, 485. Suhaylî, on the other hand, states (III, 229) on the authority of "some commentatotrs" whom he does not specify that the assassins attempted to scale the wall of the house but the shriek of a frightened lady in the house desisted them from so doing.
4. *Bukhârî,* nos. 3615, 3652. See also below (text).
5. *Bukhârî,* no. 3905.

rators, states very distinctly that the Prophet stayed at 'Abû Bakr's house till night when they both went to the cave, adding that this happened when there remained only three more nights to go of the month of Ṣafar.[1] A fourth report, given by Ibn Isḥâq and reiterated by Al-Ṭabarî, but neither mentioning the *isnâd*, states that when the Prophet decided upon migrating he went to 'Abû Bakr's house and from the backdoor of the latter's house they both left for the cave of Thawr.[2] A fifth report, also without proper *isnâd*, quotes the Prophet's maid servant Maria as saying that she bent down for the Prophet to step on her and thus scale the wall on the night he escaped from the unbelievers.[3]

Running counter to the five above mentioned reports are two reports. One, attributed to Ibn 'Abbâs, says that on that night 'Abû Bakr came to the Prophet's house but only found 'Alî there who informed him that the Prophet had already left the house for Bi'r Maymûn whither 'Abû Bakr should go and join him. Thereupon 'Abû Bakr went there, met the Prophet and then they both went to the cave of Thawr.[4] The other report is that of Muḥammad ibn Ka'b al-Quraẓî which is reproduced by Ibn Isḥâq[5] and, with a different chain of narrators, by Al-Wâqidî.[6] It says that on the arrival of the assassins at the gate of the Prophet's house, their leader 'Abû Jahl started shouting abuses to him, ridiculing particularly his teachings about resurrection, the day of judgement, rewards and punishments. At this the Prophet came out of the house, answered 'Abû Jahl's abuses, adding that he ('Abû Jahl) was himself one who would be punished by Allah. The Prophet then took a handful of dust, recited the first few *'âyahs* of *sûrat Yâ-Sîn* (no. 36) and threw the dust on the assassins' heads wherefore they were blinded temporarily and the Prophet then left his house unobserved. After sometime another person who had seen the Prophet going out came to the assassins and informed them that their target had already left the house. Yet, peeping at the bed where 'Alî was sleeping, they persuaded themselves that the Prophet was inside the house and that their informant had lied to them. So they waited there till

1. Ibn Sa'd, I, 228. Also quoted in Ibn al-Jawzî, *Al-Wafâ' etc.*, p. 238.

2. Ibn Hishâm, I, 485; Al-Ṭabarî, *Târîkh*, II, 378 (I/1239).

3. *Al-Istî'âb*, no. 7269; *Al-Jarḥ wa al-Ta'dîl*, 2/2/36-37.

4. *Musnad*, I, 331. The same report given in *Al-Musdakrak*, III, 4, does not contain the above piece of information.

5. Ibn Hishâm, I, 483.

6. Ibn Sa'd, I, 228.

morning when, finding only 'Alî in the house, they realized that their informant was right.

This repoprt, besides being *mursal* in that Muḥammad ibn Ka'ab al-Quraẓî was a *tâbi'î* born some forty years after the migration and he does not mention the source of his information, raises a number of other questions that seriously impair its credibility. The instruction given to the Prophet by Jibrîl not to sleep in his bed that night meant not simply that he (the Prophet) should only put another person in his own bed and then wait in the house to see what happened and then make his escape, if necessary. The clear implication of the instruction was that the conspirators were very likely to enter his house and seek him out there and that therefore he should stay away from his usual place. Indeed the very fact that Allah informed the Prophet about the conspiracy of his enemies as soon as it was hatched meant that he should take all possible precaution to avoid and baffle their attack. As against such instructions the Prophet could not reasonably have taken any chance of remaining within the easy range of his enemies, the more so because the instructions clearly indicated the possibility of the assassins' attacking him in his own house. Secondly, 'Abû Jahl and his fellow conspirators clearly planned to accomplish their design surreptitiously and suddenly, taking the Prophet and his clansmen unawares. Hence it was as unlikely on 'Abû Jahl's part to start shouting and abusing the Prophet on reaching his door as it was unexpected of the Prophet to come out of the house and face the enemies, notwithstanding his having been advised not even to stay in his bed that night! Such a conduct on his part is also contrary to the careful plans and preparations he by all accounts had made for the migration. If it is assumed, on the other hand, that the purpose of 'Abû Jahl's allegedly abusing the Prophet was to incite him into coming out of his house, then that would be all the more reason why he should not have done so. Moreover, the question would then arise: why should then 'Abû Jahl and his men have given the Prophet the time to contradict the abuses, to pick up the dust, to utter the *'âyahs* etc., instead of immediately rushing at him and attacking him, as they had planned to do?

As regards the other report which says that 'Abû Bakr came that night to the Prophet's house only to find that he had already left his house, it betrays a lack of coordination between the two which is inconsistent with 'Â'ishah's (r.a.) report and also with the fact of their previous consultations and plans. It is also inconsistent with the fact of the conspirators' keeping a watch out-

side the house. 'Abû Bakr could not have simply come to and gone out of the house without being intercepted, if not attacked, by them. If he had come early in the night before they surrounded the house he would have found the Prophet there; for he would not have left too early if he had at all asked 'Abû Bakr to come to his house. If, on the other hand, the Prophet had left his house well before the enemies were likely to surround his house he would have headed straight to 'Abû Bakr's house or to the place agreed on between them. At all events the report is essentailly inconsistent with the fact of previous consultations and plans made by the Prophet and 'Abû Bakr.[1]

On these considerations it may be stated on the basis of the five first mentioned reports, particularly the report of 'Â'ishah (r.a.) that, even if the Prophet had returned to his house after finalizing the plans with 'Abû Bakr, he left his house well in time before the enemies surrounded it. He then joined 'Abû Bakr in his house and then the two left together for the cave at dead of night from the latter's house by its backdoor, apprehending quite reasonably that the enemies could even keep a watch on the normal exit from 'Abû Bakr's house.

Let us now have a look at 'Â'ishah's (r.a.) report on the subject. She states that one day at noon she and her sister 'Asmâ' were with their father 'Abû Bakr at home when someone drew his attention to the Prophet who was coming to them with his face covered (most probably as protection against the heat of the mid-day sun). She adds that normally the Prophet used to come to their house either in the morning or in the evening-time; but never at that hour of the noon. Seeing him indeed coming 'Abû Bakr remarked that there must have been something serious which had brought him there at that odd hour. On coming to the spot the Prophet sought permission to enter the house. As he was welcomed into the house he asked 'Abû Bakr to be alone with him. 'Abû Bakr told the Prophet that those who were there were but his own family members.[2] The Prophet then disclosed that he had received Allah's permission and instructions to migrate. 'Abû Bakr eagerly enquired whether he could accompany him. As the Prophet

1. Sulaymân Ḥamd al-'Awda attempts to reconcile this report with the report of 'Â'ishah (r.a.) by suggesting that the Prophet had returned to his house after having consultations with 'Abû Bakr (*Al-Sîrat al-Nabawiyyah fî al-Saḥîḥayn wa 'inda Ibn Isḥâq*, etc,. unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Imam Muḥammad University, 1407/1987, p. 403). This explanation, however, ignores the inherent inconsistency of the report with the fact of their careful plans.

2. At that time 'Â'ishah (r.a.) had already been married to the Prophet.

replied in the affirmative 'Abû Bakr's joy knew no bounds.[1] He then asked the Prophet to accept one of the two camels he ('Abû Bakr) had been specially maintaining for the expected journey. The Prophet agreed to do so on condition of 'Abû Bakr's accepting the price for the animal. 'Â'ishah then says that she and her sister 'Asmâ' hurriedly arranged some food for their taking with them and that her sister, finding nothing to tie the food with, tore her belt into two and therewith fastened the foodstuff for them. For that reason, adds 'Â'ishah, 'Asmâ' came subsequently to be called *Dhât al-Niṭâqayn* (owner of two belts).[2]

'Â'ishah does not give further details and says immediately after this that the Prophet and 'Abû Bakr went to the cave of Thawr where they remained for three nights. Her brother, 'Abd Allah, who was a very clever youth with sharp intelligence, used to stay with them in the cave at night, leaving it very early in the morning and returning to Makka well in time to make it appear that he had passed the night there. During the day he collected as much information as possible about the Quraysh leaders' talks and plans against the Prophet and at night he reported everything to the Prophet and 'Abû Bakr. On the other hand 'Abû Bakr's servant 'Âmir ibn Fuhayrah used to take 'Abû Bakr's flock of goats to graze near the Thawr hill and when darkness engulfed the region to take the goats up to the cave, to milk some of them and give the milk to the Prophet and 'Abû Bakr to drink it. 'Âmir in his turn used to return to Makka with the goats at night and then again to go with the goats in the morning to graze near the Thawr hill till night. Thus did 'Abd Allah and 'Âmir alternately take care of the Prophet and 'Abû Bakr during night and day. 'Â'ishah further says that the Prophet and 'Abû Bakr had hired an experienced guide of Banû al-Di'l, of the tribe of 'Abd ibn 'Adiyy (i.e. 'Abd Allah ibn 'Urayqiṭ), who undertook to look after the two camels during the Prophet's and 'Abû Bakr's stay in the cave and then to be present at the spot with the two animals and his own ride at a specified time. He did so according to the instructions given to him.[3]

On their part the Quraysh conspirators, when they found out that the Prophet had given them a slip, they first caught hold of 'Alî and questioned

1. Another version of the report says that Abû Bakr wept out of joy.

2. *Bukhârî*, nos. 3905. See also nos. 2979, 3907 and 5388.

3. *Bukhârî*, no. 3905. More or less the same facts are related, on 'Â'ishah's authority, by Ibn Isḥâq (Ibn Hishâm, I., 484-487), Ibn Sa'd (I, 229) and others.

him about the Prophet. He did not, however, divulge to them any clue to the Prophet's whereabout. Hence they hurried to 'Abû Bakr's house and questioned 'Asmâ' where her father was. As she pleaded her innocence of his whereabouts 'Abû Jahl slapped her so forcefully that her ear-ring fell away.[1] Indeed the conspirators' anger was as high as was their disappointment, the more so because they had laboured under the mistaken impression that their conspiracy was quite unknown to the Prophet so they would take him unawares.

Being unable to obtain any information about the Prophet from either 'Alî or 'Asmâ' the Quraysh leaders sent their armed youths in all directions in search of the Prophet and his companion. They specially tracked down all the exits from the town as far as they thought the Prophet might have travelled within the night. They also employed experts in foot-print to trace the direction of their escape. According to Al-Wâqidî a person named Kurz ibn 'Alqama was one such expert employed for the purpose by the Quraysh leaders.[2] One of the Quraysh search parties did indeed go upto the mouth of the Thawr cave. Miraculously enough, though they were so near its mouth that its inmates could see their feet from inside the cave, they did neither enter it nor peep into it. Speaking about that critical moment 'Abû Bakr states that he looked upwards and saw the feet of some Quraysh people. In an understandable mood of panic he said to the Prophet: "O Messenger of Allah, if any of them should look downward he would see us". The Prophet said to him: "Keep quiet. We the two, Allah is the third with us."[3] The Qur'ân specifically refers to this incident at 9:40 as follows:

﴿.. فقد نصره الله إذ أخرجه الّذين كفروا ثاني اثنين إذ هما في الغار إذ يقول لصـــحبه لا تحزن إنّ الله معنا فأنزل الله سكينته عليه... ﴾ (٩ : التوبة ٤٠)

"...Then Allah indeed helped him when the disbelievers had driven him out, he being one of two when the two were in the cave and when he said to his companion; 'Grieve not, verily Allah is with us'. So Allah sent down His tranquility on him..." (9:40)

Some reports speak of various miracles like the growth of a tree at the

1. Ibn Hishâm, I, 487. 'Asmâ' was at the time pregnant for about four months; for her son 'Abd Allah was born almost immediately on her migration to Madina some six months subsequently. (*Bukhârî*, nos. 3909, 3910).

2. Cited by Ibn Ḥajar, *Fatḥ al-Bârî*, VII, 279; *Al-'Iṣâbah*, III, 291.

3. *Bukhârî*, nos. 3922, 4663; *Muslim*, no. 2381; *Musnad*, I, 4.

mouth of the cave wherein two doves rested in their nests;[1] or of a spider and its web covering the entrance of the cave so that the unbelievers, seeing these, concluded that none had lately entered it and they thus retraced their steps without looking into it.[2] The degree of authenticity of these particular reports is open to question;[3] but the essence of all such reports is that it was indeed a miracle caused by Allah and His unseen help that turned away the unbelievers from the Prophet and his companion and saved them from being detected and captured although they were under the very nose of their pursuers.

IV. ONE HUNDRED CAMELS FOR THE HEAD OF EACH

The Prophet and 'Abû Bakr remained in the cave for three nights after which 'Abd Allah ibn Urayqiṭ, according the agreement, arrived there at the appointed time with the two camels and his own ride. 'Âmir ibn Fuhayrah also came ready to travel. The party of four then started from the cave, taking their route towards the coast.

Abû Bakr states that they started at night,[4] travelled at a stretch for the whole night and till noon on the following day. The heat of the sun and the desert growing intolerably intense he was looking for a suitable spot to take rest therein when a high rock appeared before his eyes at a distance. On approaching it he found that its shade was quite suitable for their taking rest therein. He cleared the spot and made a bed with a piece of fur which he had with him and then asked the Prophet to sleep on it, he himself keeping a watch over him and all around. Presently he noticed a shepherd with his flock of goats coming towards the spot for the same purpose of taking shelter in the shade. 'Abû Bakr asked the shepherd about his identity and came to know that he was in the employ of an inhabitant of Makka whom he ('Abû Bakr) knew. He then asked the shepherd whether there was milk in

1. Ibn Sa'd, I, 229.

2. *Musnad*, I, 348.

3. See for instance, Aḥmad Shâkir (ed.), *Al-Musnad*, V, 87, note to *hadîth* no. 3251; *Mîzân al-I'tidâl*, III, 306; Al-Ghazâlî, *Fiqh al-Sîrah*, 173, n. 2 (comments of Al-Albânî).

4. *Bukhârî*, no. 3917; Muslim, no. 3009. Cf. *Bukhârî* no. 3905 wherein 'Â'ishah (r.a.) says that 'Abd Allah ibn Urayqiṭ came to the cave in the "morning" (صباحا) on the expiry of three nights. Their starting from the cave at night is more likely because it was the more suitable time for travelling and for avoiding notice by others. Ibn Ḥajar does not offer any explanation for this apparent discrepancy between the two statements. These can be easily reconciled, and very reasonably too, by assuming that the guide came to the cave at dead of night and they started just after midnight.

the goats with him. He replied in the affirmative. Hence 'Abû Bakr requested him to milk a goat and give them some milk. The shepherd complied with the request. 'Abû Bakr offered the milk to the Prophet when he woke up and he drank it to his satisfaction. 'Abû Bakr adds that he was very happy at this. After taking rest for sometime and when the sun declined they resumed their journey through the desert.[1]

In the meantime the Quraysh leaders, having failed in their immediate attempts to detect and capture the Prophet and his companion had declared a price on the head of each to the effect that anyone who would capture and bring to them the two persons, dead or alive, would be rewarded with one hundred camels for each. Not only this, the Quraysh leaders sent their emissaries specially to the tribes lying on the way to Madina, as far as possible, to inform them of this declaration, thus setting the greyhounds of the nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes against the Prophet and 'Abû Bakr. One such dangerous and desperate character, Surâqah ibn Mâlik ibn Ju'shum, who thus attempted to haunt the Prophet and his companion for the purpose of obtaining the prize himself narrates the story which, supplemented by Abû Bakr's statements, is as follows:

Surâqah states that the emissaries of Quraysh came to his tribe, Banû al-Mudlij (living near Qudayd) and informed them that anyone who would either kill or capture the Prophet and 'Abû Bakr would get a reward of one hundred camels for each. In such a state of affair he was one day sitting in a gathering of the people of his tribe when a person of that tribe came to the place and informed them that he had just seen a small party going towards the coast, adding that he thought they were Muḥammad (ﷺ) and his companions. Surâqah says that he could instantly realize that those persons were the Prophet and his companions; but, for deluding others and himself alone getting the credit and reward for the deed, he said to the informant that those whom he had seen were not they but such and such persons who had just passed by that place. So saying he remained with the gathering for some time. Then he came to his house, took his lance, bow and arrows, went out by the backdoor of the house, mounted his horse and quickly drove away in search of the Prophet and his party. After some time the latter did indeed appear into his view. He sped up all the more but suddenly his horse stumbled and threw him on the ground. Thinking it to be a discouraging omen he consulted his divining arrow which indicated what he did not like, namely,

1. *Bukhârî*, nos. 3908, 3917, *Muslim*, nos. 2009, 3009.

that he would not be successful in his mission. Yet, disregarding the result of the divination, he continued his journey and came so near them that he could hear the Prophet reciting the Qur'ân. Surâqah says that he noticed that the Prophet was sitting calmly on his camel without looking right, left or backward, whereas 'Abû Bakr was doing so constantly and keeping watch on all directions.[1]

'Abû Bakr says that when he noticed that a pursuer was on their heels he nervously drew the Prophet's attention to it. One version of the report says that 'Abû Bakr even burst into tears, not for his own sake, but for the safety of the Prophet. The Prophet prayed to Allah seeking safety with Him from their pursuer and told 'Abû Bakr not to be disheartened, for Allah was with them.[2]

Instantly, says Surâqah, the two front legs of his horse sank suddenly into the ground and he was jerked away from the horse and fell on the ground. He yelled at the horse to get up. After much effort the horse did pull out his legs from the ground; but a column of dust and smoke rose from the spot high into the sky. He once again consulted his divining arrow and once again it gave the same discouraging result. He then shouted out to the Prophet and 'Abû Bakr, telling them his name and assuring them that he would do them no harm and requested them to stop and listen to him. At this they stopped. Surâqah says that the repeated discouraging signs had fully convinced him that the affair of the Prophet would soon prevail. Therefore on coming to them he informed them all about the Quraysh leaders plans and intentions including their declaration of the reward of 100 camels for anyone who could capture each of them dead or alive. He also urged them to accept the food and provisions he had with him. The Prophet, declined, however, to take anything of that but asked him only to keep their whereabouts a secret and also to prevent or divert others from coming on their track. Surâqah promised to do so and prayed for a warrant of security from the Prophet. He asked Fuhayrah to write one for him, which Fuhayrah did on a piece of bone or skin and gave it to Surâqah. Then the Prophet and his companions resumed their journey and Surâqah returned to his home.[3]

1. *Bukhârî*, no. 3906.

2. *Ibid.*, nos. 3615, 3652, 3908, 3911; *Muslim*, nos. 2009, 3009; *Musnad*, I, 2.

3. *Ibid.;* also *Bukhârî*, nos. 3906, 3908, 3911. Surâqah preserved the warrant with him and presented it to the Prophet after his victory at Ḥunayn and embraced Islam then. — Ibn Hishâm, I, 490.

V. THE LATER PHASE OF THE JOURNEY

With the Surâqah incident over the Prophet's progress towards Madina entered a new phase. They were now about two days journey from Makka, leaving Qudayd behind at a considerable distance. They were therefore now in a zone where the writ of the Quraysh leaders did not so readily run. Also Surâqah proved true to his promise. He states specifically that after his return to his place he met several persons who were out in search of the Prophet and he truned them away by saying that he had exhaustively searched all possible routes as far as possible so that there remained nothing for them to look for.[1] Indeed the Prophet and his party were now in a comparatively safer zone and henceforth they did not meet with any dangerous situation worth mentioning.[2]

The Prophet and his party, from now on, followed more or less the usual route to Madina. Ibn Isḥâq and Ibn Sa'd give the names of places the Prophet passed by in the course of his migration;[3] but it is difficult to determine the exact route on the basis of these statements; for the place-names have changed considerably since then. At any rate, even if the Prophet and his party followed alternative tracks, they seem to have reverted at times to the main and usual route, either for taking rest at suitable spots or for making short-cuts. This is indicated by three pieces of information that have come down to us. These are (a) their taking rest at the camp of 'Umm Ma'bad which was on the main route and which was a sort of rest-house for travellers; (b) 'Abû Bakr's being recognized by some men whom he knew previously and who enquired about the Prophet and (c) their meeting on the way a party of Muslim merchants returning from Syria among whom there was Al-Zubayr ibn al-'Awwâm, 'Abû Bakr's son-in-law (husband of 'Asmâ').

The story of 'Umm Ma'bad ('Âtikah bint Khâlid) is interesting. She belonged to Banû Khuzâ'ah and was a public-spirited lady who used to con-

1. *Bukhârî,* no. 3615; *Muslim,* no. 3009.

2. There is of course the report which says that Buraydah ibn al-Ḥaṣîb of Banû Aslam, with seventy or eighty men of his tribe, went out in search of the Prophet to capture him and met him at a place called al-Ghamîm, but being impressed by his personality and words embraced Islam along with all his companions. (Ibn Sa'd, IV, 242; Ibn al-Jawzî, *Al-Wafâ',* 248). The report itself, however does not state that when he met the Prophet, Buraydah showed any hostile attitude to him.

3. Ibn Hishâm, I, 491; Ibn Sa'd, I, 232-233.

duct business in her camp and provide food and drink to the travellers. On arrival at her camp the Prophet sought to buy meat and dates from her but she had none in stock at the time. The report mentions that the locality was passing through a time of scarcity of food and other provisions. Her husband was away grazing their flock of goats. The Prophet looked around the camp and noticed a goat in one corner. He asked 'Umm Ma'bad why the goat was there. She replied that it was too weak to be taken out to grazing. The Prophet enquired whether there was milk in the goat. She said that it was too weak to have milk. Yet the Prophet asked whether she would allow him to milk the goat. She said that she had no objection to his doing so, if he could find any milk in it. The Prophet then prayed to Allah and touched the goat's udder which, miraculously enough, instantly swelled up with milk. He then took a pot and milked the goat. Everyone of the party and 'Umm Ma'bad herself drank the milk to their satisfaction, the Prophet drinking last of all. He then milked the goat again and left a potful of milk for her and her husband.[1] The Prophet and his party then left the place. According to one version of the report 'Umm Ma'bad embraced Islam at the hand of the Prophet before his departure;[2] while another version says that she subsequently migrated to the Prophet and then embraced Islam.[3] Shortly after the Prophet's departure from the place 'Umm Ma'bad's husband, 'Abû Ma'bad, returned to the camp and was exceedingly surprised to see the milk. 'Umm Ma'bad narrated to him the whole story and also gave a very graphic description of the Prophet's appearance and personality. Her husband exclaimed that her visitor was none else than the man of Quraysh about whose affair so much had been heard. He also expressed his ardent wish that if he had had the chance to do so he would certainly have accompanied the Prophet.

At some place in the course of their journey the Prophet and his party came across some people who knew 'Abû Bakr on account of his previous travels to Syria. They did not however know the Prophet. Therefore they asked 'Abû Bakr who his companion was. 'Abû Bakr did not like to disclose the Prophet's identity for reasons of security. Accordingly he cleverly replied that the person was his "guide" by which they understood him to be the

1. Ibn Sa'd, I, 230-232; *Al-Mustadrak*, III, 9-10; Abû Nu'aym, *Dalâ'il*, 337-343; Ibn al-Jawzî, *al-Wafâ'*, 244-247; etc.

2. *Al-Mustadrak*, III, 10.

3. Ibn Sa'd, I, 232.

guide of the way while 'Abû Bakr meant by the expresion his guide to the truth.[1] At another stage of their travel the Prophet's party met a group of Muslim merchants returning from Syria. Among them was Al-Zubayr ibn al-'Awwâm. He presented the Prophet and 'Abû Bakr with pieces of white cloths brought from Syria which they had on them when they approached Madina.[2]

Thus travelling for ten to twelve days the Prophet and his companions arrived at the vicinity of Madina. There the *'anṣar* and the *muhajirs*, having come to know of the Prophet's exit from Makka, had been eagerly awaiting his arrival any day. Each morning they used to go out to the open stony ground at the side of Qubâ' and wait there till the heat of the noon sun obliged them to retire and come home. One day, when they had just returned from their long wait in the open they heard the shouting of a Jew. The latter had noticed from the high roof of his buliding a small party of travellers appearing at a distance in the desert and advancing towards the town. He instantly recognized that they were the Prophet and his party. He therefore shouted out to the Muslims telling them that the "good fortune" for which they had been waiting was there in the desert coming to them. Hearing this the Muslims hurriedly equipped themselves with weapons and went out in a body to receive the Prophet. Accompanied by them the latter entered Qubâ' on the outskirt of Madina and took his residence with Banû 'Amr ibn 'Awf.[3] According to most of the authorities the Prophet arrived at Qubâ' on Monday, 12 Rabî' I of the 14th year of his mission (1 H., corresponding to 23 September 622 A.C.). After a few days 'Alî ibn 'Abî Ṭâlib, having faithfully discharged the duty with which he had been entrusted, arrived and joined the Prophet. Subsequently the Prophet's and Abû Bakr's family members arrived and joined them.

With the arrival of the Prophet at Qubâ' the Makkan period of his mission ended and a new era of his life as well as of Islam began.

1. *Bukhârî*, no. 3911; Ibn Sa'd, I, 233-234, 235.

2. *Bukhârî*, no. 3906. See also *Fatḥ al-Bârî*, VII, 286; *al-Mustadrak*, III, 11.

3. *Bukhârî*, no. 3906; Ibn Hishâm, I, 492-492; Ibn Sa'd, I, 233. Both Ibn Isḥâq and Ibn Sa'd state that the Prophet stayed in the residence of Kulthûm ibn Hidm of Banû 'Amr ibn 'Awf.

CHAPTER XXXIX

THE ORIENTALISTS ON THE MIGRATION TO MADINA

The orientalists' views on the background and process of migration to Madina may be discussed under five main headings, namely, their views regarding (a) the Prophet's visit to Ṭâ'if; (b) the negotiations with the tribes and with Madina; (c) the reasons for the Madinites' acceptance of Islam and the Prophet; (d) the manoeuvres of the Quraysh and (e) the manner of the migration itself.

I. REGARDING THE VISIT TO ṬÂ'IF

With regard to the visit to Ṭâ'if the orientalists generally accept the main facts mentioned in the sources, namely, that after 'Abû Ṭâlib's death the Prophet's position became untenable at Makka so he sought support at Ṭâ'if, that he approached mainly 'Abd Yâlîl and his brothers, who were the leaders of their people, that they not only rejected him but also incited the townsfolk to hoot the Prophet out of the town, that he rested at the garden of 'Utbah and Shaybah in the outskirts of Ṭâ'if, that their servant 'Addâs was impressed by the Prophet's words and showed him unusual respects, that the Prophet next halted at Nakhlah and Ḥirâ' and that he re-entered Makka under the Protection of Muṭ'im ibn 'Adiyy. Within the framework of these facts, however, the orientalists make a number of suggestions and assumptions. These centre mainly round the causes of the Prophet's going to Ṭâ'if and the considerations that might have weighed in his mind when he approached its people.

Muir says that the Prophet's position at Makka had reached such a stage that "he must either gain ascendency" there, or "abandon his prophetic claims, or else perish in the struggle." Most of his followers were away in Abyssinia and there had lately been no conversions, "none at least of note, since those of Omar and Hamza three or four years before." "Open hostilities", stresses Muir, "nothwithstanding every endeavour to prevent them, might any day precipitate the struggle, and irretrievably ruin his cause."[1] Hence he began to look around for support. Secondly, Muir implies that the Prophet was now sure that divine visitation would soon befall Makka for its rejection of him. "Mecca knew not the day of its visitation;" writes Muir,

1. Muir, *op.cit.*, 104-105.

"and its doom was well nigh sealed."[1] Thirdly, Muir adds that the Prophet might have expected to win over the people of Ṭâ'if who, though connected by "frequent" intermarriage, "were jealous of the Coreish. They had a *Lât* or chief idol, of their own. It might be possible, by appealing to their tribal pride as well as conscience, to enlist them on the side of Islam against the people of Mecca."[2]

By the expression "open hostilities" in the above mentioned statement Muir obviously means the outbreak of armed conflict. Also by saying that such "open hostilities" would "irretrievably ruin his cause" Muir clearly means that the Prophet was not in a position to start such hostilities and that it was from the side of the Quraysh leaders that such armed attack was apprehended; though a little later on Muir endeavours to uphold the supposed pacific intentions of the Quraysh leaders.[3] In so far as he means to say that the Prophet's position at Makka had become untenable, it is in essence correct.

His other two suggestions, namely, that the Prophet might have imagined an imminence of divine visitation befalling Makka and that he might have intended to take advantage of the supposed jealousy of the inhabitants of Ṭâ'if against the people of Makka, they both are untenable and unjustifiable assumptions. The Qur'ân, and therefore the Prophet of course repeatedly reminded the unbelieving Quraysh of the fate of the persistently unbelieving people of the past, with the implication that such might be their fate too if they persisted in their wrong course; but there is nothing in the Qur'ân nor in the traditions to suggest that the Prophet, either on the eve of his visit to Ṭâ'if or at any other time apprehended the imminence of divine visitation on Makka. Similarly the assumption that he might have intended to play upon the supposed jealousy of the people of Ṭâ'if is belied by the stark fact that no section of the people of that town showed any interest in or inclination towards the Prophet.[4] Muir's statement: "They had a *Lât,* or chief idol of their own", is somewhat misleading. If he means that they had a rival goddess and therefore a rival priestly class as opposed to those at Makka, it would be rather a reason for their similar opposition to the Prophet as exhi-

1. *Ibid.*, 105.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Infra*, pp. 893-895, 916-919.
4. See also below, text.

bited by the priestly class at Makka, than for their supporting him against the Makkans. After all he did not definitely go to Ṭâ'if to champion the cause of their "chief idol"! Indeed, the total rejection of the Prophet by the people of Ṭâ'if calls more for an explanation of their doing so than for surmising, as Muir does, about their supposed jealousy towards Makka which the Prophet might probably have thought of exploiting to his benefit.

In this respect Margoliouth's treatment of the subject is different in that he pays greater attention to what he supposes to be the causes of the Ṭâ'ifians' rejection of the Prophet. So far as the causes of the Prophet's going there are concerned, Margoliouth disposes of them rather summarily saying: "After Abu Talib's death the Prophet is said to have suffered severe persecution", so he left Makka "with the view of obtaining a footing elsewhere."[1] A little later on he makes a novel suggestion saying: "one of the ruling family at Ta'if had a Kurashite wife, hence as a Kurashite Mohammed could claim the protection of the ruling family".[2] The allusion is to the family of 'Amr ibn 'Umayr whose three sons, 'Abd Yâlîl, Mas'ûd and Ḥabîb were leaders of Ṭâ'if and one of whom had indeed married a lady of Banû Jumaḥ of Makka. That, however, was not the Prophet's primary consideration in approaching that family. Indeed the suggestion is naive; for the Quraysh themselves, including Banû Jumaḥ, were opposed to the Prophet. Hence the fact of his being "a Kurashite" could have been no consideration for him to approach a Ṭâ'ifian family just because they were matrimonial relations of a Quraysh family of Makka. The very fact could be more appropriately cited in explaining the hostile attitude of 'Abd Yalîl brothers towards the Prophet.

Stressing the fact of Ṭâ'if's rejection of the Prophet Margoliouth observes that the Prophet "could not apparently have made a worse choice" of the place to seek support from. And in explaining this rejection by Ṭâ'if Margoliouth makes use virtually of the same facts as are utilized by Muir for explaining the Prophet's motives in going there. Thus, first, Margoliouth says that the town of Ṭâ'if was connected with Makka by so many ties. So the former adopted a similar policy to the Prophet. Secondly, the people of Ṭâ'if "were no less devoted to their goddesses" and "years after they made a tougher fight for their religion than any other Arab town."[3] Thirdly, while

1. Margoliouth, *op.cit.*, 178.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*

Muir says that most of the people of Ṭâ'if had previously heard about the Prophet and his mission and initially regarded him with awe but turned against him when their leaders rejected him,[1] Margoliouth assumes that though Ṭâ'if was not two days' journey from Makka and though many Makkans had property at the former place, the Prophet's mission, even though ten years had elapsed of it, "had not reached the ears of the people of Ṭa'if."[2] Hence they paid little heed to him, hearing him for the first time. Thus do Muir and Margoliouth draw opposite conclusions on the basis of the same facts and the same situation. The former's statement that the people of Ṭâ'if turned against the Prophet at the instance of their leaders is in consonance with the facts and the sources. Margoliouth's assertion, on the other hand, that the people of Ṭâ'if had previously been completely in the dark about the Prophet and his mission is a pure assumption made with a view understandably to belittling the latter.

The emphasis put by Margoliouth on Ṭâ'if's rejection of the Prophet seems to have been lost on Watt, who in his turn, pays his main attention to the causes and motives of the Prophet's going there for support. In doing so Watt adopts and elaborates Muir's views noted above. Thus, after mentioning that the Prophet had done whatever was possible for him to do at Makka and that there had been no notable progress of conversions there since the conversion of 'Umar, Watt echoes Muir's remark about the impending doom of Makka. He says that though the sources speak, as reasons for his seeking support elsewhere, of the "increasingly humiliating treatment" the Prophet received after 'Abû Ṭâlib's death, "the possibility should not be entirely overlooked that he expected some calamity to befall Mecca after its rejection of him, and wanted to remove his followers."[3] It must at once be pointed out that the surmise is unjustified. There is nothing in the sources to suggest that the Prophet went to Ṭâ'if being apprehensive of an imminent downpour of divine wrath on Makka. Nor is there any indication that he planned to remove his followeres to Ṭâ'if.

It is, however, the other hint of Muir's, namely, that the Prophet probably intended to take advantage of the Ṭa'ifians' supposed jealousy against Makka, that Watt mainly works on. He reiterates in this connection his the-

1. Muir, *op.cit.*, 106.
2. Margoliouth, *op.cit.*, 180.
3. Watt, *M. at M.*, 139.

ory that "possibly as a result of the war of Fijâr" Ṭâ'if had to acknowledge the financial supremacy of the Quraysh; that Banû Makhzûm had at least financial dealings with Banû Thaqîf. Watt also refers to the two main political groups at Ṭâ'if, the Banû Mâlik and the 'Aḥlâf. The former, he says, were in intimate relationship with the powerful neighbouring tribe of Hawâzin; and to "counterbalance" this the 'Aḥlâf "sought support from Quraysh". Watt then states: "There must almost certainly have been some point of dissension in local politics of which Muḥammad wanted to take advantage." In approaching 'Abd Yâlîl and his brothers he perhaps "hoped to attract them by the bait of financial deliverance from the clutches of Makhzûm."[1]

As shown earlier,[2] the theory of Ṭâ'if's coming under the financial or commercial control of Makka as a result of the *Fijâr* war is wrong. Also, if Banû Makhzûm had financial dealings with some people at Ṭâ'if, so had a number of Banû Thaqîf financial and commercial dealings with many Makkans. It was essentially a two-way traffic and there was no question of the one side being under any sort of control of the other. Watt himself recognizes that "the relationship was not entirely one-sided" and points out that Al-Akhnas ibn Sharîq of Banû Thaqîf was for sometime leader of Banû Zuhrah of Makka.[3] Not only that; it should be noted that 'Abd Yâlîl and his borthers, the leaders of Ṭâ'if, far from being under "the clutches of Makhzûm", were themselves financiers, according to some reports, to many Makkans including members of Banû Makhzûm itself.[4] The greatest objection to the theory is that if the Prophet intended to take advantage of "some point of dissension in local politics", he would have approached the leaders of Banû Mâlik and not 'Abd Yâlîl and his brothers who belonged to the 'Aḥlâf and who, by Watt's own analysis, were friendly to the Quraysh. Finally, the very fact that no section of the people of Ṭâ'if showed any inclination towards the Prophet negatives the surmise that there was any such local dissensions that might encourage an outsider to attempt to exploit them in his favour. The truth is that the Prophet went to Ṭâ'if because his position had become untenable at Makka and because he thought that the people of

1. *Ibid.*

2. *Supra,* Chapter IX.

3. Watt, *M. at M.,* 139. Watt cites Lammens for this fact. It is, however, clearly mentioned in Ibn Hishâm, I, 282, 315, 360, 381.

4. See Al-Ṭabarî, *Tafsîr,* III, 107.

that neighbouring town might listen to his message, accept it and offer him protection and help. The remark which Muir makes at the end of his treatment of the event is just to the point. He says: "There is something lofty and heroic in this journey of Mahomet to Tayif; a solitary man, despised and rejected by his own people, going boldly forth in the name of God, like Jonah to Nineveh, and summoning an idolatrous city to repent and support his mission. It sheds a strong light on the intensity of his belief in the divine origin of his calling."[1]

II. REGARDING THE NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE TRIBES AND WITH MADINA

Regarding the Prophet's negotiations with the tribes and with Madina the orientalists concentrate their attention mainly on the causes of the success of Islam at Madina and its reception of the Prophet. Besides this question, however, they make some incidental remarks relating to the various aspects and events of the period. For convenience of discussion these incidental remarks are dealt with in the present section.

To begin with, Muir, referring to the incidents of *'Isrâ'* and *Mi'râj*, says that after the completion of the first stage of negotiations with Madina the Prophet's thoughts so veered northward that "his musings of the day reappeared in the slumbers of the night" and he dreamt to have been carried away to Jerusalem. Not only that, his "excited spirit conjured up a still more transcendent scene", making him ascend from one heaven to another till "he found himself in the awful presence of his Maker", etc.[2] Now, so far as the dating of the incidents is concerned, Muir's mentioning them at this stage in the Prophet's career is no doubt in accord with the view of most of the Muslim classical scholars. Also, since the incidents are essentially miraculous in nature and belong to the domain of belief, it is understandable if a non-believer in the Prophethood of Muḥammad (ﷺ) and the divine origin of the Qur'ân treats these incidents as "dreams" by the Prophet. But what is not understandable is the causation suggested by Muir. If the successful conclusion of the first round of negotiations with Madina had so excited the Prophet's mind and thoughts towards the north, the supposed dream produced by those "musings" would have made him travel in the first instance to Madina and do wonderful things there, instead of making him go to the far-off Jerusalem and then on to the "awful presence of his Maker". The

1. Muir, *op.cit.*, 109.
2. *Ibid.*, 117.

causation suggested by Muir is as inconvincing as it is purely imaginary. Interestingly enough, he dismisses as later fabrication the tradition which says that the Prophet actually saw in dream that Madina was the place where the Muslims were to migrate.[1]

A second assumption of Muir's is that though the Prophet had long given attention to the politics in the north, particularly the conflict between the Byzantine and the Persian empires, making even a "sagacious augury" in *sûrah* 30 (*al-Rûm*) about the ultimate victory of the Romans, it was only "about this period" i.e., after the conclusion of the First 'Aqabah Pledge, that his interest in the Roman empire increased and therefore he gained, "either from Christian slaves at Mecca, the neighbouring fairs, or from fragments of the Gospels copied by Waraqa and others some acquaintance with the outlines" of the life of Jesus and treated it "in the ordinary legendary" and fragmentary style in the Qur'ân.[2]

The absurdity of the assumption is best illustrated by the fact that he makes virtually the same conjectures in explaining the origin and beginning of Islam and in saying that the Prophet came up with his claims to prophethood and his doctrines after having borrowed ideas from Christianity and Judaism, etc.[3] Also Muir's dating of *sûrat Maryam* (19) after the Prophet's return from Ṭâ'if[4] is grossly wrong. The *sûrah* was revealed much earlier and, as is well known, it was recited by Ja'far ibn 'Abî Ṭâlib at the court of the Abyssinian ruler in reply to his query about the Prophet's teachings. In any case, it is manifestly absurd to suppose that the Prophet, after at least ten years of his mission and after having faced so much opposition and criticisms by the unbelievers, thought of obtaining some desultory information about Jesus and his teachings only when he (the Prophet) decided to move to a place nearer the then Christian Syrian border!

A third suggestion of Muir's is that after the First Pledge of 'Aqabah the Prophet, waiting patiently for the coming of the Madinite converts to him in the following *ḥajj* season, relaxed his aggressiveness. "Islam was for the present", says Muir, "no longer to be aggressive. And the Coreish, congratulating themselves that their enemy had tried his worst and now was

1. *Ibid.*, 129, n. 1.
2. *Ibid.*, 118-119.
3. See *supra*, pp. 265-268.
4. Muir, *op.cit.*, 139 ff.

harmless, relaxed their vigilance and opposition." In support of this statement Muir quotes in his own translation the Qur'ânic passage 6:106-108 which, he says, provided for the Prophet the divine authority for relaxing his aggressiveness.[1]

The innuendo in the above statement that Islam, i.e., the Prophet, had been aggressive in his work of propagation before the conclusion of the First 'Aqabah Pledge is as unfounded as is the suggestion that after the latter incident there was a relaxation in that supposed aggressiveness. The continued stay of the Prophet at Makka after his return from Ṭâ'if till the migration to Madina may be explained without assuming a relaxation of the supposed aggressiveness on the one hand and the consequent relaxation of vigilance and opposition on the other. In fact Muir's own statement about the background to the Prophet's visit to Ṭâ'if, namely, the utter untenability of his position at Makka, the virtual stoppage of the progress of Islam there and his being abandoned and ousted by his own people simply made it unnecessary for the Quraysh to wait for any change of policy on his part to induce them to relax their vigilance and opposition, if they did so at all. In fact, there was no relaxation as such of their vigilance and opposition. The Prophet was suffered to stay at Makka because, in their view, he had been reduced to complete helplessness, and because he had been given protection by Muṭ'im ibn 'Adiyy and also because, as pointed out earlier,[2] by the fact that Banû Hâshim had now freed themselves from the policy of 'Abû Lahab and attended to their duty of protecting their kinsman. In any case, the Qur'ânic passage 6:106-108 cited by Muir does in no way mark any remarkable change of policy on the Prophet's part.

Its first *'âyah*, 6:106, instructs the Prophet to follow what had been revealed to him and to "turn aside from the polytheists" ﴿وأعرض عن المشركين﴾. This last expression does not mean a cessation of preaching to the unbelievers; it is an exhortation to disregard their opposition and to forbear their manoeuvres and oppression. Nothing illustrates this sense more clearly than the conjoining of the same expression with the very first command to begin open preaching: ﴿فاصدع بما تؤمر وأعرض عن المشركين﴾ "So preach openly what you are commanded and turn aside from the polytheists."[3] The second *'âyah*

1. *Ibid.*, 120
2. *Supra*, p. 871.
3. Q. 15:94. See also 53:29; 7:199 and 32:30.

of the passage 6:107 points out to the Prophet that he was no overseer (حفيظ) of the unbelievers' acts. This also was no new exhortation. The Prophet's role as mere warner (نذير), giver of good tidings (بشير) and as one not with any compelling authority over anyone was stressed repeatedly in many earlier Qur'ânic passages, which only illustrate the non-overbearing and non-aggressive nature of the Prophet's mission.[1] The third *'âyah* of the passage (6:108) is an exhortation to the Muslims not to revile the others' gods. Probably Muir has mainly this *'âyah* in view. Clearly it relates to the over-enthusiasm of some new converts and therefore relates to a state of affairs obtaining earlier and not commensurate with the Prophet's position after his visit to Ṭâ'if. In any case there was no relaxation in the rejection of the idols as worthless objects undeserving of worship. Significantly enough, the very first *'âyah* of the passage under notice reiterates this uncompromising attitude and states: "Follow what is revealed unto you by your Lord. There is none worthy of worship except He. So ignore (turn aside from) the polytheists." The denunciation of the idols and idolatry is here as emphatic as elsewhere in the Qur'ân. Needless to point out that when the rejection of idolatry and polytheism is so unequivocally asserted, the mere abstinence of some converts from abusing the unbelievers' objects of worship, which is the most that can be made out of the *'âyah*, would hardly be a ground for the Quraysh leaders to relax their vigilance and opposition. The passage in question does in no way mark any substantial change of policy so as to induce the Quraysh leaders to suspend their opposition and enmity.

On his part Margoliouth offers an easy answer to the question of the Prophet's continued stay at Makka after his return from Ṭâ'if. "Since favours are usually granted with conditions attached to them", says Margoliouth, "we are entitled to infer" that the Prophet "was only permitted to enjoy the protection of a Meccan family on condition that he confined his proselytising endeavours to strangers."[2] Clearly Margoliouth is here guided by the fact of the Prophet's negotiations with the tribes and the people of Madina during the period under review. In making the assumption, however, Margoliouth does not explain why, if any such condition was attached to Muṭ'im ibn'Adiyy's granting of protection to the Prophet, it is not mentioned in the report concerning it. Margoliouth also fails to see through the implica-

1. See for instance Q. 11:12; 15:89; 17:105; 22:49; 25:1; 25:56; 29:50; 32:3; 33:45; 34:28; 34:44; 34:46; 35:23-24; 35:42; 38:70; 42:48; 46:9; 48:8; 51:50; 67:26.

2. Margoliouth, *op.cit.*, 181-182.

tions of the supposed bargain. It would mean a virtual and formal abandonment of opposition by the Quraysh leaders, giving the Prophet a free hand to go on converting the surrounding tribes and then to take on the Makkans with a *fait accompli.* The Makkan leaders could not conceivably have been blind to such a suicidal course. Such a change of policy would not also go unnoticed by the tribes. But, in fact, Margoliouth is very much self-contradictory in making the assumption; for just in his previous paragraph he elaborates how, when the Prophet during this period used to approach the tribes at the time of the pilgrimage or fairs, "Abu Jahl" ['Abû Lahab] followed him, "throwing clods at the preacher and warning" them "not to abandon their gods"[1] — a fact which gives a loud lie to the assumption that the Quraysh leaders had given freedom to the Prophet to preach to the tribes. And this fact brings us to the third oversight on Margoliouth's part. The approach to the tribes and strangers was made by the Prophet mainly or almost exclusively during the season of *ḥajj* and the fairs, i.e., during the sacred months when it was the solemn duty of the Arabs to cease hostilities and maintain peace so that everyone was free and safe to move about and generally none needed any protection of anyone. Hence there was no question of the Quraysh leaders' giving the Prophet freedom at that particular time, nor was it really necessary for him to take anyone's protection for that purpose only. Margoliouth's inference, or rather assumption is clearly misconceived, besides being contradictory to the fact he himself mentions.

The assumption of some condition having been attached to Muṭ'im ibn 'Adiyy's standing surety for the Prophet is taken over, however, by Watt, though he does not make any mention of Margoliouth in this connection. "We may suppose", says Watt, "that he [Muṭ'im] laid down certain conditions, though there is no mention of them in the sources."[2] Watt takes care not to hazard any guess about the nature of the supposed conditions. He also attempts to explain the silence of the sources on this point, saying that the "story is repeated in honour of the clan of Nawfal. Later it was passed over lightly, since it was discreditable to Hâshim; it was seemingly omitted by Ibn Isḥâq", but inserted by Ibn Hishâm.[3] The argument is inconvincing. Any condition or conditions, if at all, would have been imposed at the instance of

1. *Ibid.,* 181.
2. Watt, *M. at M.,* 140.
3. *Ibid.*

the Quraysh leaders, as was done by them in the case of Ibn al-Dughunnah's standing surety for 'Abû Bakr.[1] Hence that sort of condition would entail no discredit on Muṭ'im or Banû Nawfal as such. There was no question of suppressing it if, as Watt surmises, the story was "repeated in honour of the clan of Nawfal." Nor is it understandable why, if the story was passed over lightly at a subsequent time because it was "discreditable to Hâshim", the supposed conditions only should have been omitted, and not the fact itself of the granting of protection by a non-Hâshimite. After all, the mention of the condition or conditions would rather have lessened the discredit to Banû Hâshim! The fact is that the story was neither initially "repeated in honour of the clan of Nawfal", nor subsequently passed over lightly to avert discredit on Banû Hâshim. The fact of the Prophet's grateful remembrance of Muṭ'im's help has been reported by may including Ibn Isḥâq.

Besides the above mentioned assumption Watt makes two other statements in connection with the Prophet's negotiations with the tribes and others. He says that the Prophet initially conceived himself to be one sent "solely or primarily to Quraysh" and adds that "there is no way of telling whether prior to the death of 'Abû Ṭâlib he had thought of an expansion of his mission to the Arabs in general." The deterioration of his position after 'Abû Ṭâlib's death, declares Watt, "forced him to look farther afield." Hence during the last three years of his stay at Makka "we hear only of dealings with nomadic tribes and with the citizens of at-Ṭâ'if and Yathrib."[2]

The suggestion is only in line with the view of many an orientalist who often describes the Prophet of Islam as the "Arabian Prophet" and suggests that Islam was originally meant mainly for the Arabs and the neighbouring peoples. Watt here further restricts the suggestion, saying in effect that Muḥammad (ﷺ) was initially a Makkan and subsequently an Arabian Prophet. Such characterization of the scope and nature of the Prophet's mission is both mistaken and misleading. It is contradicted by both the Qur'ân and the known facts of the Makkan period of the Prophet's career.

So far as the Qur'ânic evidence on the point is concerned, reference should be made first to those passages that say in so many words that Allah's retribution does not befall a habitation (*qaryah* قرية) until a warner or

1. *Supra*, pp. 675-676.

2. Watt, *M. at M.*, 138. In fact Watt captions this chapter of his, dealing with the events from the visit to Ṭâ'if to the migration to Madina, "Expanding Horizons".

Prophet has been sent to it,[1] that never was a Prophet sent to a *qaryah* except that its people opposed and ridiculed him[2] and that an Arabic Qur'ân had been sent to the Prophet in order that he might warn therewith "The Mother of Habitations and those around it."[3] There is also a passage which says that the Quraysh used to say that were a Prophet sent to them they would be the better in receiving guidance than any of the peoples; but when a warner did come to them they only increased in disobedience.[4] These are the passages that could at the worst be twisted to suggest that the Prophet's mission was intended for Makka, the "Mother of Habitations." The main purpose of these particular passages is, however, to bring home the truth of Muḥammad's (ﷺ) Prophethood to the Makkan unbelievers. The passages do in no way say that the Prophet was sent to and for the Makkan people only. On the contrary the expression "The Mother of Habitations", together with the clause "and those around it" used in both the relevant passages (42:7 and 6:92) leave no room for doubt that both Makka and the surrounding habitations are within the purview of the passages. In fact the very expression "Mother of Habitations" alone implies that the message delivered to it is also intended for all the habitations of which it is the "Mother" or centre/capital. That this is its implication is very clear from two other significant passages, namely, 25:51 and 28:59. The former passage says:﴿ولو شئنا لبعثنا فى كل قرية نذيرا﴾ "Had it been Our will, We would have sent a warner to every habitation." The other passage states more specifically: ﴿وما كان ربّك مهلك القرىٰ حتىٰ يبعث فى أمّها رسولا....﴾ "And your Lord is not to destroy the habitations (i.e. the whole country) until He had sent to their centre/capital (*'ummihâ*) a Messenger...." Thus the very passages that speak of Makka or Mother of Habitations mean clearly that the message delivered to it was also intended for the habitations/ settlements within the land that recognized Makka as their spiritual as well as material centre. There was thus no question of the Prophet's conceiving his mission at any stage of his career to be meant solely or primarily for the Makkan Quraysh. It may also be noted that the above mentioned passages range from the mid- Makkan to late-Makkan period.

Besides the above there are four other passages that call upon the Prophet

1. Q. 6:131; 15:4; 26:208.
2. Q. 7:82; 27:56; 34:34; 43:23; 47:13; 65:8.
3. Q. 6:92 and 42:7.
4. Q. 35:42.

to warn and instruct a particular people. These say that the revelation has been made easy in his language that he may deliver good news to the God-fearing men and warn a "contumacious people" (قوما لُدّا)[1]; that the revelation is a mercy from his Lord to the Prophet to warn a people to whom no warner before you had come[2] or whose ancestors had not been warned.[3] The general nature of the expression *qawm* (قوم) used in all these four passages suggests that the Arab people rather than the Quraysh only are in view. Once again it must be noted that these passages too do not say that the Prophet was sent only for them. It is further to be noted that they range from the early Makkan to the late Makkan period; and some of them are even earlier than the passages in the first category.

There are, however, a third group of Qur'ânic passages of which many are definitely earlier than the passages of the two above mentioned categories and all of which very distinctly state that the Qur'ânic revelations and their messages are meant for makind and the world as a whole. Some of these significant passages are as follows:

(1) ﴿وما هو إلا ذكر للعـٰلمين﴾ (٦٨:٥٢ القلم)

"And it (the Qur'ânic revelation) is naught but a reminder for all the worlds/nations." (68:52 *sûrat al-Qalam*)

(2) ﴿إن هو إلا ذكر للعـٰلمين﴾ (٨١:٢٧ التكوير)

"It (the Qur'ânic revelation) is naught but a reminder/recital to all the worlds/nations." (81:27 *sûrat al-Takwîr*)

(3) ﴿...وما هى إلا ذكرىٰ للبشر ....نذيرا للبشر﴾ (٧٤:٣١، ٣٦ المدثر)

"....And these (the Qur'ânic revelations) are naught but instructions to mankind..........an admonition to mankind."(74:31,36 *sûrat al-Muddaththir*)

(4) ﴿وما أرسلـٰنك إلا كافة للنّاس بشيرا ونذيرا...﴾ (٣٤:٢٨ سبأ)

"We have sent you but for the entire mankind, as a giver of good tidings and as a warner..." (34:28 *sûrat Sabâ'*)

(5) ﴿تبارك الّذى نزّل الفرقان على عبده ليكون للعـٰلمين نذيرا﴾ (٢٥:١ الفرقان)

"Blessed is He Who sent down the *Furqân* (Qur'ân) on His servant that he (or it)

1. Q. 19:97 =﴿فإنما يسّرنـٰه بلسانك لتبشّر به المتقين وتنذر به قوما لدّا﴾

2. Q. 28:46 and 32:3. They run respectively as follows:

﴿...ولكن رّحمة من ربّك لتنذر قوما ما أتـٰـهم من نّذير مّن قبلك...﴾

﴿...بل هو الحق من ربّك لتنذر قوما مّا أتـٰـهم من نّذير من قبلك...﴾

1. Q. 36:5-6 = ﴿تنزيل العزيز الرّحيم * لتنذر قوما مّا أنذر ءاباؤهم فهم غـٰفلون﴾

may be a warner to all the worlds/nations."(25:1 *sûrat al-Furqân*)

(6) ﴿وما أرسلنـك إلا رحمة للعـلمين﴾ (٢١: ١٠٧ الأنبياء)

"We have sent you not but as a mercy for all the worlds/nations." (21:107 *sûrat al-Anbiyâ'*)

(7) ﴿قل يـأيها النّاس إني رسول الله إليكم جميعا...﴾ (٧: ١٥٨ الأعراف)

"Say: O mankind, I am Allah's Messenger to you all." (7:158 *sûrat al-'A'râf*)

(8) ﴿...وأوحي إليّ هذا القرءان لأنذركم به ومن بلغ...﴾ (٦: ١٩ الأنعام)

"And this Qur'ân has been communicated to me that I warn you therewith and those whom it reaches."(6:19 *sûrat al-'An'âm*)

(9) ﴿...كتـب أنزلنـه إليك لتخرج النّاس من الظّلمـت إلى النّور...﴾ (١٤: ١ إبراهيم)

"A Book We have sent down to you that you bring out mankind from the darknesses to the light."(14:1 *sûrat Ibrâhîm*)

(10) ﴿هـذا بلـغ للنّاس ولينذروا به وليعلموا أنّما هو إلـه وحد...﴾ (١٤: ٥٢)

"This is a communique for mankind, and in order that they are warned therewith and that they know that He is One God ..." (14:52 *sûrat Ibrahim*)

(11) ﴿إنّا أنزلنا عليك الكتـب للنّاس بالحقّ...﴾ (٣٩: ٤١ الزمر)

"Verily We have sent down the Book on you for mankind with the truth ..." (39:41 *surat al-Zumar*)

(12) ﴿...أن أنذر النّاس وبشّر الّذين ءامنوا...﴾ (١٠: ٢ يونس)

"... That you warn mankind and give good tidings to those who believe ..." (10:2 *sûrat Yunus*)

(13) ﴿...ونزّلنا إليك الذّكر لتبين للنّاس ما نزّل إليهم...﴾ (١٦: ٤٤ النحل)

"...And We have sent down unto you the Recital so that you clarify to mankind what is sent down to (for) them ..." (16:44 *sûrat al-Naḥl*)

(14) ﴿وقرءانا فرقنـه لتقرأه على النّاس على مكث...﴾ (١٧: ١٠٦ الإسراء)

"And a Qur'ân We have portioned it in order that you read it unto mankind at intervals ..." (17:106 *sûrat al-'Isrâ'*)

(15) ﴿قل يـأيها النّاس قد جاءكم الحقّ من ربّكم...﴾ (١٠: ١٠٨ يونس)

"Say O mankind, the truth has indeed come to you from your Lord ..." (10:108 *sûrat Yûnus*)

These are only some of the relevant passages. There are indeed many more such passages in the Makki *sûrahs* alone emphasizing the universal nature of the Prophet's mission and stating clearly that the instructions, illus-

trations and instances given in the Qur'ân are meant for mankind (للناس).[1] It should be clear from the above, however, that from the very beginning of his career and throughout the Makkan period (and also subsequently) it was repeatedly declared that the Prophet's mission and the revelations sent down to him were intended for mankind and the world as a whole, and not simply for the the Quraysh or the Arabs only. This was the nature and purpose of the Prophet's mission and Messengership. So far as the operational aspect of the mission was concerned it had necessarily to start at a particular place and among a definite people, as he himself was born at a specific place and was from among a specific people. It is noteworthy that to begin with the Prophet was divinely advised to warn his near and blood relations ﴿وأنذر عشيرتك الأقربين﴾; but no one should or could infer from that fact that he initially considered himself to be a Prophet only to his family and relatives! And as soon as the start was made openly the operational aspect of the mission was extended to include all the inhabitants of Arabia —"The Mother of Habitations and those around it", and also those of the other lands who chanced to come in contact with the Prophet. The emphasis on "The Mother of Habitations" was made because of its importance and central position among all the habitations of the land, and not with a view to specifying and restricting the scope and nature of the mission. Even then, the expression was invariably tagged with "those around it" ﴿ومن حولها﴾, thus clearly indicating the extra-Makkan nature of the operational aspect since the very beginning. Similarly the emphasis on *Arabic* Qur'an was made not for restricting its revlevance to the Arabs, but for stressing the fact that since it is in their own language they should understand and accept it the more easily and readily. For the same purpose of bringing home the truth to them it was pointed out that no Prophet had previously been sent to them or to their ancestors. This statement too was not made to mean that the Prophet was only for a particular race or people. At all events, even restricting our consideration to the operational aspect only there is nothing in the Qur'ân to sustain the assertion that the Prophet originally thought himself to be a Prophet to the Quraysh of Makka only and that it was only after 'Abû Ṭâlib's death when his position at Makka became untenable that he started looking farther afield.

It is also worth noting here that the universality of a movement or message does not lie in its being started or disseminated simultaneously all over

1. See for instance Q. 45:20; 39:27; 30:58; 29:43; 28:43; 24:35; 18:17; 17:89 and 14:44.

the world, but in the universality of its appeal and relevance to similar situations at every place and among every people. That is why the French Revolution (1789-1793 A.C.), though it took place mainly in Paris and not remarkably in any other part of France itself, was nonetheless a European revolution because the destruction of the divine-right and despotic monarchy and the system of privileged classes there foreboded the doom of similar systems everywhere in Europe. When Islam denounced polytheism and idolatry in all their different shades, that message in itself constituted a threat to all sorts of polytheism and its beneficiaries among mankind as a whole. When it denounced and rejected, as it did at a very early stage of its life, the deification of human beings through the concepts of either divine incarnation or divine sonship or daughtership, it posed and poses a threat to such practices and beliefs all over the world.

Apart from the Qur'ânic evidence a number of broad and well known facts of the Prophet's Makkan career belie the assumption that prior to 'Abû Ṭâlib's death he did not think of extending his mission beyond Makka and the Quraysh people. It is well-known that since the beginning of open preaching the Prophet used to preach Islam to the pilgrims and others of the different tribes of all Arabia who visited Makka and the neighbouring sacred spots during the *ḥajj* season. It is also well-known that he used to preach at the various fairs like 'Ukâẓ, Dhû-al-Majâz and Majanna where great numbers of people from all parts of Arabia used to come and remain for specified periods. In fact Ibn Isḥâq very clearly points out that as the first *ḥajj* season approached after the beginning of open preaching by the Prophet, the Quraysh leaders conferred to decide how to counteract the effect of his preachings to the tribes who would visit Makka then. They ultimately decided to dub him as a sorcerer and posted their men at all the approaches and entrances to the city to warn the pilgrims against the Prophet. In so doing they in fact did more than the Prophet himself did to disseminate his news to the tribes. Ibn Isḥâq very aptly says: "The Arabs departed that season with a knowledge of the affair of the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings of Allah be on him, and talk about the Prophet spread all over the Arab lands."[1] Thus from the very beginning the Prophet took special care to preach to the non-Makkan Arab people whenever an opportunity to do so

1. Ibn Hishâm,I, 270-272; Ibn Isḥâq, *Al-Siyar wa al-Maghâzî,* 150-152. See also *supra,* p. 646.

presented itself to him.

Secondly, it is also an acknowledged fact that some leading and influential persons from distant tribes embraced Islam at the Prophet's hands at Makka. It is further on record that some of those distant converts desired to stay with the Prophet at Makka; but he sent them away with the instructions for them to work for spreading Islam among their own respective peoples. These facts clearly indicate that their conversions took place fairly before the Prophet's visit to Ṭâ'if. For, after that event his position became very critical at Makka and he himself continued to live there under the protection of Muṭ'im ibn 'Adiyy. It would be no time for such converts to propose to stay with the Prophet at Makka. Nor was the affair of the Prophet so unknown at the time as to prompt the Quraysh leaders to forewarn their visitors to shun the Prophet, which by all accounts was the reason for the visitors' growing curious about the Prophet and led ultimately to their meeting him and embracing Islam. The most prominent of such converts from distant tribes were Ḍimâd ibn Tha'labah al-Azdî[1] and 'Abû Ḍharr al-Ghifârî.[2] Even the conversion of Ṭufayl ibn 'Amr al-Dawsî took place in all likelihood before the Prophet's visit to Ṭâ'if. For not only did the Quraysh leaders' forewarning to him about the Prophet roused his (Ṭufayl's) curiosity about the latter, he, after his conversion, returned to his tribe, preached Islam among them for some time and again came to the Prophet at Makka and asked him to pray for the success of Islam among the Daws tribe. It may also be noted that Ibn Isḥâq, though he is not quite chronological in his description of the events, narrates the story of Ṭufayl ibn 'Amr's conversion[3] before speaking about 'Abû Ṭâlib's death[4] and the Prophet's visit to Ṭâ'if.[5]

Thirdly, with regard to the Prophet's approach to the tribes seeking their protection the process, as indicated before, seems to have started before 'Abû Ṭâlib's death. In saying that the Prophet did not extend his mission to the Arab tribes before the latter event, Watt seems to have overlooked the fact that while, in the earlier years, the Prophet presented Islam to the tribes and asked them only to embrace it, in the post-'Abû Ṭâlib period he

1. *Al- 'Iṣâbah*, no. 4177 (II/210). See also *supra*, pp.535-536.

2. *Bukhârî*, no. 3523. See also *supra*, 537-538.

3. Ibn Hishâm, I, 382-385.

4. *Ibid.*, 415-418.

5. *Ibid.*, 419-422.

approached the tribes both for their embracing Islam and for their affording him protection and help against the opposition and hostility of the Quraysh leaders. Be that as it may, there is no doubt that contact with Madina was made before 'Abû Ṭâlib's death; for the well-Known incidents of the 'Aws's deputation to the Quraysh leaders seeking their military alliance against the Khazraj, the Prophet's urging Islam on the members of that deputation and the conversion of one of them, Iyâs ibn Mu'âdh, to Islam, all took place before the Bu'âth war. Thus it is only by disregarding facts like these and also the Qur'ânic evidence noted above that one can state: "there is no way of telling whether prior to the death of Abû Ṭâlib he [the Prophet] had thought of an expansion of his mission to the Arabs in general."

The other (third) statement of Watt's in connection with the approaches to the tribes is that he says "the earliest sources" mention only Banû Kindah, Banû Kalb, Banû Ḥanîf and Banû 'Âmir ibn Ṣa'ṣa'ah having been approached by the Prophet. "It is difficult to know", he remarks, "why these tribes and no others are mentioned." He then attempts to find the Prophet's "special reasons for expecting that they might listen to what he had to say." Watt suggests that because with the exception of the first mentioned tribe the other three were "either wholly or partly Christian", this might be the special reason. He however adds that "it is impossible to be certain" about it and concludes by saying: "What we are justified in believing is that at this period Muḥammad began to summon members of nomadic tribes to accept Islam, and that behind this activity there was at least a vague idea of the unity of all Arabs."[1]

By "the earliest sources" Watt acknowledgedly means Ibn Hishâm (Ibn Isḥâq) and Al-Ṭabarî whom he cites in his footnote. He is however mistaken in thus assuming that the earliest sources speak only of these four tribes having been approached by the Prophet. Ibn Sa'd, among others, gives a report of Al-Zuhrî and others which mentions at least 15 tribes whom the Prophet approached. And since the premise that only the four tribes are mentioned in this connection is wrong, the surmise about the special reason for so doing is also wrong, besides being unnecessary. It is also not correct that it was only at "this period" that the Prophet "began to summon members of nomadic tribes to accept Islam." The statement, as indicated above, is clearly prompted by an oversight of the real nature of the Prophet's approaches to

1. Watt, *M. at M.*, 140-141.

the tribes at "this period", which was, besides calling them to Islam, to seek their support and protection against the enmity and opposition of the Quraysh. In fact Watt's whole approach here is somewhat self-contradictory and anomalous. Previously, in connection with the causes and beginning of opposition to the Prophet, he suggests that Muḥammad (ﷺ), in order to counterbalance the opposition of the Quraysh leaders, sought to win over to his side the peoples of Ṭâ'if, Nakhlah and Qudayd by recognizing their respective deities.[1] And now Watt suggests that the deterioration of the Prophet's position at Makka after 'Abû Ṭâlib's death made him look beyond Makka, that at this period he began to summon the members of the nomadic tribes to accept Islam and that behind this activity there lay a "vague idea of the unity of all Arabs." The two suggestions regarding the Prophet's supposed expanding outlook made at the two places are clearly inconsistent. As shown earlier and above, Watt's previous suggestion about the attempted winning over of the peoples of Ṭâ'if, Nakhlah and Qudayd is as wrong as is his later suggestion that it was only after 'Abû Ṭâlib's death that the Prophet started looking beyond Makka. It was not "a vague idea of the unity of all Arabs" which now lurked in the Prophet's mind; rather it is a vague assumption about the Prophet's alleged political motives which prompts the making of such contradictory statements. It is also clearly anomalous to suggest that a person who originally conceived himself to be a prophet and reformer only to a particular locality and its people and who worked under that impression and to that end for long ten years started thinking in terms of reforming and uniting all the peoples of the land beyond his own locality because he had been rejected by that locality and because he had failed to unite its people under him! No sensible reformer or aspirant to leadership would be so inordinately ambitious. Clearly the approach fails to see some important aspects of the Prophet's career and leaves something more to be said and understood about him.

III. ON THE CAUSES OF ISLAM'S SUCCESS AT MADINA

As regards the reasons for the Madinites' favourable response to the Prophet the views of Muir, Margoliouth and Watt differ, one from the other. Muir's main suggestion is that it was the direct and indirect influence of Judaism and Christianity together with the effects of the battle of Bu'âth that prepared the ground for the acceptance of Islam and its Prophet at Madina.

1. *Supra*, p. 721.

Margoliouth, however, does not accord any credit to Christianity and suggests that it was the influence of Judaism and the efficacy of the Jewish God as exhibited in the battle of Bu'âth that led the 'Aws and Khazraj to flock to Muḥammad (ﷺ) who claimed himself to be a Prophet and agent of the Jewish God. Watt, in his trun, attempts to find the material reason for the Madinites' acceptance of Islam and its Prophet. He does not speak of any Judaeo-Christian influence in this connection. The following is a brief analysis of their respective views.

Muir says (a) that the idea of a Messiah was communicated by the Jews to the 'Aws and Khazraj whose mind was thus prepared to recognize in Muḥammad (ﷺ) the coming Prophet; (b) that the "pure theism" and "stern morality of the Old Testament" made them realize the contrast with the errors of heathenism; (c) that Madina was "only half the distance of Makka from the Christian tribes of Syria", so Christianity combined with Judaism "probably wrought a more powerful effect upon the social condition of Madina than upon any other part of the Peninsula"; (d) that the battle of Bu'âth had "weakened and humiliated one of the factions without materially strenthening the other; and the citizens, both Arab and Jewish, lived in uncertainty and suspense; so the wearied factions welcomed "the stranger driven from Mecca"; (e) that the politics of Makka and the affairs of the Prophet and his teachings were fairly known to Madina through yearly visits of pilgrims to Makka and through the Quraysh trade caravans frequently halting at Madina; (f) that "through the marriage of Hâshim with a lady of Madina" the Prophet "himself had the blood of the Beni Khazraj in his veins, and a favourable interest, among that tribe at least, was thus secured"; and (g) that the Jews "were already acquainted with the Prophet as a zealous supporter of their Scriptures."[1] To these factors were superadded the advocacy of actual converts.[2]

That the idea of a coming Prophet or Messiah was communicated by the Jews to the 'Aws and Khazraj and that the two tribes, being exhausted and therefore eager for peace and stability after the devatstating battle of Bu'âth welcomed the Prophet as a neutral leader are very clearly stated in the sources. It is also evident that the politics at Makka and the Prophet's affairs there were known to the Madinites through various channels and that the

1. Muir, *op.cit.*, 112-113.
2. *Ibid.*, 114.

Prophet was distantly related to the Khazraj through Hâshim's marriage with a lady of that tribe (i.e.'Abd al-Muṭṭalib's mother). But neither mere Knowledge of the Prophet and his teachings nor distant relationship seem to have had any mentionable influence upon the 'Aws and the Kahzraj in their embracing Islam and accepting the Prophet as their leader. The Makkans themselves knew about the Prophet and his teachings far more than anyone else and they were more closely related to him by blood and marriage. Yet the vast majority of them, even most of the Prophet's own clan Banû Hâshim, held themselves aloof from Islam. As regards Muir's points about the influence of Judaism and Christianity (b and c), it may be recalled that he says almost the same things in suggesting Judaeo-Christian origin of Islam and of the rise of the Prophet. No wonder that he reiterates the same arguments in connection with the Madinites' acceptance of Islam. It is, however, doubtful whether the influence of Syrian Christianity was any the more profound at Madina because of its being closer to the Syrian border. Rather the Makkan Quraysh leaders were in more direct contact with Syrian Christianity in the course of their frequent trade travels there. In general, however, the nature and extent of Christian influences were similar in Makka and Madina. The inhabitants of the latter place of course lived side by side with the Jewish tribes there. It is therefore quite understandable that the 'Aws and the Khazraj had a more intimate knowledge of the Jews and their religious practices. Yet, not to speak of Christianity, there was no noticeable inclination among the 'Aws and the Khazraj even towards Judaism, though, as at Makka so at Madina, a tendency towards monotheism had manifested itself prior to the rise of Islam and indeed a few persons (*ḥanîfs*) did profess monotheism there at Madina. These believers in monotheism did not embrace either Christianity or Judaism obviously because some fundamental aspects of these systems must have appeared to them to be incompatible with their notions of pure monotheism. In any case, the question that poses itself is: Why, despite all the influences and proximity of Christianity and Judaism the Madinites did not embrace either, particularly Judaism, in spite of the fact that they were more closely in touch with the latter and their Jewish neighbours were acnowledgedly suprior to them both financially and educationally? If the 'Aws and the Khajraz had embraced Judaism in any number there would probably have been no Bu'âth war and no need for finding a neutral leadership in an individual outside the ranks of the two rival tribes. Even if after the Bu'âth war the victorious 'Aws had opted for the

religion of their allies (Banû Qurayẓah) they could combinedly have worked out a stable socio-political mechanism in which the Khazraj would have to acquiesce. But even the 'Aws readily abandoned their allies and joined their age-old rival tribe in welcoming Islam and the Prophet. The mere desire for peace and stability almost immediately after their victory appears to be an inadequate explanation for the conduct of the 'Aws tribe at least. The circumstances indicate that the real cause of the success of Islam at Madina has to be sought in the cause of the failure of Judaism there.

Muir of course suggests a reason for the Madinites' preferring Islam to Judaism. Speaking a little later on about the progress of Islam at Madina following the First 'Aqabah Pledge Muir says that the Jews of the place observed in amazement that the "people whom for generations they had vainly endeavoured to convince of the errors of heathenism" were now of their own accord casting aside their idols and professing belief in one true God. "The secret lay" writes Muir, "in the adaptation of the instrument. Judaism, foreign in its birth, touched no Arab sympathies; Islam, engrafted on the faith and superstition, the customs and the nationality of the Peninsula, found ready access to the heart."[1]

The explanation is anachronistic in two ways. It conceives of a sort of Arab national consciousness on the part of the 'Aws and the Khazraj which did not in fact exist at the time even in its vague form. Muir simply reads back a modern concept into the situation of two hitherto contending tribes who had hardly advanced beyond the level of clan loyalties and tribal concepts. Secondly, if the statement of Islam's being allegedly "engrafted on the faith and superstition, the customs and nationality of the Peninsula" has allusion to such features as the institution of *ḥajj*, the direction of prayer towards the Ka'ba, etc., which are usually but incorrectly regarded by many as the "Arab" features of Islam, it should be noted that these had not as yet been enjoined as the rites and practices of Islam. Even prayers were being offered in the direction of Jerusalem, at least on the eve of the migration to Madina. Therefore it is clearly anachronistic to say that such "Arab" or "national" features of Islam were decisive factors in the Madinites' preferring Islam to Judaism. Muir's anachronism is all the more glaring in view of his own statement that the Jews of Madina themselves viewed "the Prophet as the zealous supporter of their Scriptures." (see g above). In fact the explanation for the

1. *Ibid.*, 115.

rejection of Judaism by the 'Aws and the Khazraj has to be sought elsewhere.

The explanation given by Margoliouth is even more unreasonable. He says that those persons whose attention was first drawn by the words of the Prophet were from the Khazraj tribe who "were fresh from a severe defeat" at the hands of the united forces of the 'Aws and the Jews. As'ad ibn Zurârah, says Margoliouth, was a hater of the Jews. The Khazrajites had heard the Jews speaking "of a Messiah who would one day appear and conquer the world for them." Hence, when those Khazrajites heard the Prophet they hastened to join him in order, as the "native tradition" says, to outwit the Jews. The victory at Bu'âth had also turned the head of the Jews who regarded it "as a direct intervention of their God" in their favour; "and since the gods of the Aus had failed to secure them victory, it prepared their enemies to recognize the transcendent power of the Israelitish God, whose emissary and agent Mohammed claimed ......to be."[1] As regards the 'Aws, who had hitherto been defeated in the civil war at Madina, they had now "won a signal victory by the aid of Allah, the God of the Jews." To these victorious 'Aws the name of Allah was associated with success and "they were not willing that the favour of his [His] assistance should be transferred to those whom they had defeated." Hence they also joined the Prophet along with the Khazraj. Thus, says Margoliouth, the "expedient which had originally been intended for the continuance of the civil war resulted in uniting the parties."[2] He adds that the Jews also were "impolitic and unforeseeing" enough to attest the correctness of the first principles of Islam", namely the unity of God and the resurrection of the dead, and "the fact that prayer was to be directed towards their Temple clenched the matter." They might also have imagined to establish a Jewish throne at Madina through the instrumentality of Muḥammad (ﷺ) as they had done in South Arabia through the conversion of an Arab chieftain. "Hence the soil of Yathrib was thoroughly prepared for Islam."[3]

Apart from the surmises about the Jews' attitude, Margoliouth's main suggestion is that, being defeated by the combined forces of the Jews and the 'Aws, the Khazrajites were convinced of the efficacy of the Israelitish God and since Muḥammad (ﷺ) claimed himself to be a messenger of that God,

1. Margoliouth, *op.cit.*, 196-197.
2. *Ibid.*, 197.
3. *Ibid.*, 197-198.

they joined him to obtain the assistance of that God and to continue the civil war. On the other hand the 'Aws, also realizing that it was the assistance of the Israelitish God which had obtained victory for them in the Bu'âth war, joined the Prophet to prevent the assistance of that God from being "transferred to those whom they had defeated."

Now, it is of course true that Muḥammad (ﷺ) claimed himself to be a Messenger of the same God as that of the Jews, the God of Abraham and Moses. But Margoliouth's explanation of the Madinites' joining him for that reason is wrong in both its premise and conclusion. In the Bu'âth war the Jews themselves were divided, Banû Qurayẓah supporting the 'Aws, and Banû al-Naḍîr and Banû Qaynuqâ' siding with the Khazraj. There was thus no question of the latter's thinking that the assistance of the Israelitish God was only on the side of their opponents and that that was the main reason for their victory. Secondly, if the Khazraj were at all so convinced of the efficacy of the Jewish God, they would have attempted to obtain His assistance by drawing closer to the Jews and by directly embracing Judaism instead of seeking to please the Jewish God through a non-Jewish Prophet. After all they were friendly with two of the three main Jewish tribes. Though the Jews did not attempt to convert the 'Aws and the Khazraj, as Margoliouth says, there was no bar to their becoming Jews. Thirdly, if military considerations and an intention to "continue the civil war" against their opponents had been the Khazrajites' reasons for joining the Prophet they would have taken care to see whether the Prophet was any viable military ally. They would have then noticed that he, far from being a strong ally, was himself seeking the support of the Madinites and that the Jewish God whose "emissary" he claimed to be had not as yet apparently enabled him to gain any visible victory over his Makkan opponents. Fourthly, as for the 'Aws, if they realized that their being allied with Banû Qurayẓah had obtained for them the special favour of the Jewish God, they would have been more steadfast in continuing that alliance. There was no reason for their apprehending the transfer of the assistance of that God to their rival tribe as long as they themselves continued to remain with their Jewish allies; the more so as there was as yet no sign of that favour of victory having been bestowed on the Prophet himself. In fact, neither military considerations and an intention to continue the civil war, nor a desire to obtain the Jewish God's special favour for their respective tribes actuated the Khazraj and the 'Aws to embrace Islam and join together to help the Prophet and his cause. Margoliouth's suggestion is

in fact a contradiction in itself. If the overriding consideration on both the 'Aws's and Khazraj's parts was to secure the favour of the Jewish God as against their respective rivals, they would not have just united themselves under a third party. The distinctive feature of the whole development was the abandonment of their respective allies by both the 'Aws and the Khazraj. Instead of really explaining it Margoliouth simply confuses the issue by saying that the "expedient which had originally been intended for the continuance of the civil war resulted in uniting the parties."

On his part Watt attempts a socio-economic explanation for the development. He says that the underlying cause of the frequent feuds at Madina was the pressure of increasing population on limited food-supplies with the consequent scramble for land, because Madina was primarily an agricultural community. Often the victors in the petty warfare occupied the lands of the vanquished. Madina was thus suffering from a similar disease as that of Makka, "the incompatibilty of nomadic standards and customs" with life in a settled community which requires a "single supreme authority to keep the peace between rival individuals and groups." But the social organization at Madina was the same as in the desert, being based on tribal solidarity and clan loyalties; and the desert principle of "keep what you have armed strength to keep" was the rule of conduct. Such a conduct, though suitable for flocks and herds over vast areas, was bound to lead to an unpleasant situation "within the narrow bounds of an oasis."[1] But whereas at Makka "commercial interests tended to draw different groups together and fostered a sense of unity of Quraysh", the agricultural conditions at Madina probably fostered fragmentation and a "larger number of subdivisions of the tribes", as evidenced by the mention of thrty-three clans of 'Aws and Khazraj taking part in the battle of Badr as against fifteen clans of the Quraysh. Apart from the relevance of that evidence, says Watt, Madina was much divided. Hence "the point which had been at the root of the opposition in Mecca — Muḥammad's position as Prophet and its political implications — was the very thing which offered the Madinans some hope of peace." "A Prophet, with authority resting not on blood but on religion, could stand above the warring groups and arbitrate between them." "The Anṣâr had thus a solid material reason for accepting Muḥammad as Prophet."[2] There was

1. Watt, *M. at M.*, 142-143.
2. *Ibid.*, 144.

also a religious root of the malaise at Madina, adds Watt, namely, a "hearty sickness with the endless feuds". To this problem Islam had a solution. "Its doctrine of the Last Day implied that the meaning of life is in the quality of the conduct of the individual." "Doubtless the Anṣâr had some realization of these implications", but "the majority of them presumably became Muslims primarily because they believed the doctrines" of Islam to be true and "that God had sent Muḥammad with a message to the Arabs."[1]

Allah had sent Muḥammad (ﷺ) not simply with a "message" but with a "text" as well, and not only "to the Arabs" but to mankind in general. Apart from what he conceives to be the religious aspect of the matter, though he hedges it with so many qualifying phrases as "doubtless", "presumably became Muslims", "primarily because", etc., Watt's other points are in fact an amplification of what the classical as well as subsequent writers speak about the direct and indirect effects of the battle of Bu'âth and the Madinites' need and desire for peace and stability through a neutral leadership. Even the point about the scramble for lands being at the root of the feuds have been mentioned by Watt's predecessors. Thus Margoliouth, for instance, says that "the acquisition of land or spoil" was at the root of the dissensions at Madina[2] and that the "real purpose of the Khazraj" on the eve of the Bu'âth war "was to force the Jews into quarrel with a view to obtaining their lands".[3] This latter statement of Margoliouth's is not of course a correct view of the cause of the Jews' involvement in the Bu'âth war, it being well-known that the Jewish tribes themselves were ranged on opposite sides in the conflict. Be that as it may, the theory of the growth of population leading to conflicts over the possession of lands is not quite applicable to the Madinan situation. For the conflicts over lands had been there since the beginning of the coexistence of the 'Aws, the Khazraj and the Jews at Madina. Also the sources do not indicate any perceptible growth of population there prior to the Bu'âth war. In fact no theory of growth of population is called for to explain the scarmble for water and oases in desert conditions where such scrambles are rather the order of the day.

As regards the question of the "incompatibility of nomadic standards with life in a settled community", it may be recalled that Watt speaks of

1. *Ibid.*
2. Margoliouth, *op.cit.,* 192.
3. *Ibid.*, 194.

more or less the same thing in connection with the Makkan background of the rise of Islam. In fact he admits here that Madina was suffering from a similar disease as that at Makka. But his statement about the peculiartities of the two places is a vague generalization. It was not commercial interests that fostered unity and drew the different groups together at Makka to evolve "a single supreme authority to keep the peace between the rival individuals and groups" there. The civil government there was rather a heritage of the Quraysh from their common ancestry. It was evolved by Quṣayy and developed by Hâshim; and the civil functions were subsequently divided among the clans. The inappropriateness of Watt's analysis is evident from the fact that earlier he speaks of the growth of commercialism and "individualism" as being responsible for the division of the Quraysh clans into two rival groups; and now he adduces the same phenomenon of commercialism to suggest the growlth of greater unity among them and their evolving an administrative mechanism suitable for settled conditions. The fact is that neither his earlier nor his present generalization is correct.

As regards the supposed "larger number of subdivisions of the tribes" at Madina due to fragmentation of lands fostered by agricultural conditions, Watt himself is not quite sure about the relevance of the "evidence" on this point. Apart from that, it must also be borne in mind that the known conflicts at Madina, particularly the Bu'âth war, were not between the "subdivisions of the tribes", whatever might be their extent and causes, but between the tribes as such, including the Jewish tribes. And so far as the question of the supposed incompatibility of nomadic institutions with settled conditions is concerned, it needs also to be emphasized that neither the Jews, nor the 'Aws and the Khazraj had lately emerged from nomadic states to a settled condition. They had been settled at Madina for at least a couple of centuries prior to the Bu'âth war. Yet, not to speak of the 'Aws and the Khazraj, even the Jews, notwithstanding their better education and being in possession of a revealed Book, do not appear to have worked out a civil system going beyond nomadic standards and in which the 'Aws and the Khazraj could participate or which they could imitate. Thus neither the continuance of nomadic concepts and institutions, nor the absence of commercilaism, nor even the prevalence of agriculatural conditions would adequately account for the greater disunity of the population at Madina. The greater disunity there appears to be due primarily to the greater heterogeneity of its population.

The 'Aws and the Khazraj's acceptance of Islam and of the Prophet had three important implications. It meant, in the first instance, their realization of the truth of the doctrines of Islam and their preference for it to Judaism with which they had been in daily contact for decades. Secondly, it meant that the 'Aws and the Khazraj buried their dead past of enmity and rivalry and came forward to live a life of peace and amity under a new system of faith and conduct. Thirdly, it meant that both the 'Aws and the Khazraj turned away from their respective allies of the Jews. Indeed this abandonment of the Jews by both the 'Aws and the Khazraj and their emancipating themselves from the influence of the former is the most remarkable aspect in the whole development. The devastating effects of the Bu'âth war and the consequent desire for peace and unity through a new and neutral leadership of course weighed with the 'Aws and the Khazraj in their welcoming the Prophet amidst them. But for a proper understanding of the development it is necessary also to seek an explanation of their revulsion against their immediate neighbours and erstwhile allies.

One main reason for this revulsion was that the Jews, having capital, exploited the 'Aws and the Khazraj through an extensive and extortionate system of money-lending which aggravated their poverty and swelled the wealth of their creditors. To maintain this system of exploitation the Jews often played the one tribe against the other which was one of the main reasons for their perennial quarrels and conflicts. The Bu'âth war, in which the Jews themselves were involved, did not prove so disastorus for them as for the 'Aws and the Khazraj. And although the 'Aws were nominally victorious, the real victors were their Jewish allies, and they did not make any secret of it. Indeed, in "following up the victory and exacting full vengeance", to use Margoliouth's words, "the Jews were not restrained by the usages which the Arabs respected." It was therefore only natural that the 'Aws quickly realized that in fighting and exhausting themselves for defeating the Khazraj they had fought really for the victory of the Jews. The defeated and humiliated Khazraj similarly realized that it was not really the 'Aws but the Jews who had wrought havoc on them. The two sides thus quickly realized their mistakes, drew nearer and became desirous for a lasting peace and unity. It should be noted that some form of unity between the two tribes preceded rather than followed the coming of the Prophet to Madina. In fact they had forged a basic unity between them before they pledged their support for the Prophet and invited him to come to their place.

The Bu'âth war and the role of the Jews in it as also previously to it urged the two hitherto hostile tribes towards a new life of peace and amity. Islam and the Prophet provided this new life and the much needed neutral leadership. If any material reason for the success of Islam in Madina is to be sought, it should be sought in the relationship between the Madinite Jews and their exploited neighbours of the 'Aws and the Khazraj, and not in the supposed growth of population there nor in the incompatibility of the so-called nomadic institutions with the settled conditions, that were in any case common to both Makka and Madina. Truly did 'Â'ishah (r.a.) remark that through the Bu'âth war Allah indirectly prepared Madina for its acceptance of Islam and the Prophet.

IV. REGARDING THE MANOEUVRES OF THE QURAYSH

It has been seen that the orientalists attempt to belittle the hostility of the Quraysh and their persecution of the Muslims.[1] In consonance with the same attitude the manoeuvres of the Quraysh on the eve of the migration also are defended and belittled. Thus William Muir characterizes the conclusion of the Second 'Aqabah Pledge as "an unwarranted interference" by the Madinites "in the domestic affairs of Mecca" and calls it "virtually a hostile movement".[2] He then says that when the Quraysh leaders came to know of this development they "renewed their persecution; and wherever they had the power, sought either to force the confessors to recant, or by confinement prevent their escape."[3] Having said so and having also cited Al-Ṭabarî who speaks of two peak periods of persecution, one preceding the migration to Abyssinia and the other following the Second 'Aqabah Pledge he says: "There is reason, however, to suspect that, had the persecution been as bad as is spoken of, we should have had more frequent notices of it. Yet, excepting the imprisonment or surveillance of a few waveres, we have no detail of any injuries or sufferings inflicted on this occasion by the Coreish."[4]

The statement that "we have no detail of any injuries or sufferings inflicted on this occasion" excepting "the imprisonment or surveillance of a few waverers" is both incorrect and misleading. The sufferings inflicted on 'Umm Salamah and those on 'Ayyâsh ibn 'Abî Rabî'ah and Hishâm ibn al-

1. *Supra*, pp. 747-756.
2. Muir, *op.cit.*, 127.
3. *Ibid.*, 128.
4. *Ibid.*, n.1.

'Âṣ ibn Wâ'il, besides their imprisonment in chains for long periods, are well-known. Even if no other detail is available, the imprisonment and confinement of individuals are in themselves no negligible persecution. And if, as Muir admits, the Quraysh attempted, "wherever they had the power", to force "the confessors to recant", the amount of force applied to secure renunciation of the faith could not conceivably have been only slight. In fact Muir virtually contradicts himself in the very succeeding page of his work where he states: "Persecution and artifice caused a few to fall away from the faith."[1] He cites in this connection the cases of 'Ayyâsh and Hishâm who are stated to have "relapsed for a time into idolatry".[2] They were indeed very badly persecuted and kept imprisoned for a long period till they succeeded in escaping and joining their brethren at Madina. Muir is very wrong in stating that they relapsed into idolatry. The report of course speaks of their being jeopardized (افتتن); but this expression here indicates rather the severity of the persecution inflicted on them than their having relapsed into idolatry. Had they really recanted and renounced Islam, they would not have been kept imprisoned till their rescue, nor would the Prophet have prayed for their freedom from their Quraysh captors, as by authentic reports he did for a long time till they succeeded in rejoining the Muslims at Madina.[3] Muir is also grossly mistaken in stating that 'Ayyâsh was 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭâb's (r.a.) brother.[4]

More blatantly apologetic for the Quraysh leaders is Muir's treatment of their conspiracy to kill the Prophet on the eve of his migration to Madina. Muir takes the facts mentioned in the report on this affair given in Ibn Isḥâq's and other works about the Quraysh leaders' secret meeting and their considering the proposals either to imprison the Prophet or to expel him or to kill him and then states: "At last they resolved that a deputation should proceed to the house of Mahomet."[5] The report, after mentioning the above mentioned proposals, also mentions very clearly that they ultimately decided on killing the Prophet and selected a band of assassins who lay in wait at night outside the Prophet's house to carry out their design as soon as he came out but he gave them a slip. Muir twists this fact and describes the

1. *Ibid.*, 129.
2. *Ibid.*, 129-130.
3. See *Bukhârî*, no. 4560.
4. Muir, *op.cit.*, 129.
5. *Ibid.*, 132.

Quraysh's sending the band of assassins as their having decided "that a deputation should proceed to the house" of the Prophet. But he virtually betrays an admission of the untenability of his ill-conceived apology by saying immediately after that statement: "What was the decision as to the future course of action, what the object even of the present deputation, it is impossible amid the marvel of traditions to conclude. There is little reason to believe that it was assassination, although we are told that such was determined upon at the instigation of Abu Jahl..."[1] One may only ask, if it is impossible to "conclude" what decision was taken in the meeting, how could it be so categorically stated that at "last they resolved that a deputation should proceed to the house of Maḥomet"? Again, if "the object even of the present deputation" is not known, how could it be suggested that the group going there was a "deputation" and that its object was peaceful, notwithstanding the fact that the leaders had seriously and secretly deliberated upon the extreme measures of imprisoning, expelling or killing the Prophet, none of which could be accomplished without the use of force and by peaceful means? Did the alleged "deputation" go to the Prophet's house at night simply to ask him to leave the town peacefully or to come forward willingly and submit himself to imprisonment?.

As an excuse for his disbelieving that it was assassination that was resolved upon in that meeting Muir says that the Prophet "himself" refers to the designs of his enemies in the Qur'ân in "indecisive terms" and quotes in his (Muir's) own translation the Qur'ânic passage 8:30 which speaks of the unbelievers' plotting to imprison or to kill or to expel the Prophet. Had "assassination been the sentence, and its immediate execution ordered by the council", concludes Muir, "Mahomet would not have been slow to indicate the fact in clearer language than these alternative expressions."[2]

Muir's implication here that the Qur'ân is the Prophet's own composition must at once be contradicted. But apart from that the inference from the passage in question is wrong. The passage speaks not "indecisively" but very decisively and clearly of the serious and extreme measures the unbelievers "plotted" (مكروا) to take against the Prophet. And even if it does not specifically mention the final decision of the Quraysh leaders it cannot be argued that the passage proves that no decision was made by them regarding the

1. *Ibid.*
2. *Ibid.*, 133.

Prophet. In fact the purpose of the passage is not to give a full account of the meeting of the Quraysh leaders but to emphasize how Allah helped and saved the Prophet against all the deadly attempts of his enemies. The report which gives an account of the unbelievers' meeting is thus not at variance with the Qur'ânic passage. They each supplement and complement the other. The passage should be interpreted in conjunction with the report. Instead of doing so Muir takes the report in isolation and twists it; then he takes the Qur'ânic passage in isolation and also twits its implication to find support for his unreasonable and self-contradictory statements that it is imposiible amid the marvel of traditions to make out what decision was made at the Quraysh council and that they at "last resolved that a deputation should proceed to the house of Mahomet."

The unreasonableness of this suggestion is further betrayed by Muir in his immediately succeeding paragraph which he starts by saying: "Whatever the object of the visit, Mahomet received previous notice of it, and anticipated the danger by stealing away from his house." Muir further says that the Prophet left in his bed 'Alî to allay "the suspicions of neighbours", went straightway to 'Abû Bakr's house and "matured the plan for immediate flight", etc.[1] Now, one may only ask, if the Quraysh did not mean any harm and if the object of the alleged deputation was only peaceful, why should the Prophet, receiving previous notice of it, anticipate "the danger by stealing away from his house"? Muir here indirectly admits that the assassins came to the Prophet's house at night by mentioning the fact of 'Alî being left in the Prophet's mantle and bed. Muir also gives another twist to the fact when he says that the measure was intended to allay the "suspicions of neighbours". It was not to allay the "suspicions of neighbours" but to dupe the assassins that the step was taken. For the same purpose of maintaining his apology for the Quraysh leaders Muir omits mentioning their having declared a prize of one hundred camels for the head each of the Prophet and 'Abû Bakr and skips over the episode by stating a little later that when the Quraysh leaders came to know of the Prophet's escape, "they sent scouts in all directions with a view to gaining a clue to the track and destination of the Prophet, if not with less innocent instructions."[2] It may once again be pointed out that had the Quraysh leaders not decided on any specific action regarding the Prophet, they would rather have felt relief at his departure and would not

1. *Ibid.*
2. *Ibid.*, 136.

have taken the trouble to send scouts to track him out; for the fact of his "destination" being Madina was very much known to them.

In line with the same apology for the Quraysh leaders Muir twists also the incident of Surâqah, whom he describes as "one of the mounted scouts returning from his search", and states that he, "seeing that he had small chance single-handed against his four opponents, offered no opposition, but on the contrary pledged his word that, if permitted to depart in peace, he would not reveal that he had met them."[1] It may only be pointed out that Surâqah was not simply "one of the scouts returning from his search" but one who, lured by the prize declared by the Quraysh on the Prophet's head, had gone on his mission to kill the Prophet and thereby secure the prize. If Surâqah's mission was peaceful, he had no reason to suppose that the Prophet and his companions were his "opponents", nor to think that he had "small chance single-handed" against them. For neither did the Prophet and his companions turn against anyone whom they chanced to come across on the way, nor did Surâqah go there to fight a pitched battle with the Prophet and his companions. He had gone there well armed and confident to shoot down his object from a comfortable distance. He came back in peace not because he saw little chance of success against the four but because of the other reasons which he himself describes in the report regarding the episode.[2] He sought permission to leave in peace and undertook not to divulge that he had met them not because the Prophet and his followers had attacked and forced him to submit but because he had been miraculously incapacitated as he himself describes. In fact, through his laboured apology for the Quraysh leaders Muir only admits indirectly that Surâqah had gone on his mission to kill or capture the Prophet as the Quraysh leaders desired.

Muir is also virtually contradicted by Margoliouth who, in spite of his obvious sympathy for the Quraysh leaders and antipathy to the Prophet, admits the truth of the assassination attempt. Margoliouth says that the "respectable and good-natured" Quraysh leaders had not as yet been "hard on Mohammed's eccentricity",[3] but when they saw that "the defence of the madman" was taken over by "a guard of followers, belonging to a different city and different tribes", they decided on killing him.[4] In a rather regretful

1. *Ibid.*, 137-138.
2. See *supra*, pp. 881-882.
3. Margoliouth, *op.cit.*, 183.
4. *Ibid.*, 207.

tone Margoliouth observes that Arabia "would have remained pagan" had there been a resolute man in Makka to "strike a blow" and be ready to "accept responsibility for acting". Instead, the Quraysh leaders finally decided that "Mohammed should be assassinated, every tribe in Mecca sending a representative to take part in the murder." When, however, "the trembling conspirators reached his home, to execute their melodrama as he rose from sleep, he was not there."[1] A little later on Margoliouth again confirms the assassination attempt when he observes, rather incorrectly, that even after the Prophet's arrival at Madina, the "terrors of the attempted assassination and of the days and nights in the Cave were still on him."[2] Margoliouth's venom against the Prophet is, however, obvious through the expression "madman" used with regard to him.

Like both Muir and Margoliouth Watt also minimizes the extent of the Quraysh's persecution of the Muslims on the eve of their migration. In this connection he quotes in his own translation 'Urwah's letter given in Al-Ṭabarî and also in Ibn Hishâm and to which Muir refers by saying that Al-Ṭabarî mentions two peak periods of persecution.[3] Watt suggests that since the family of Al-Zubayr was hostile to the 'Umayyads, 'Urwah would therefore be inclined to exaggerate the persecution, "seeing that the clan of Umayyah were deeply involved in the opposition to Muḥammad."[4] The suggestion is far-fetched; for no particular allusion is made in the report to the 'Umayyads. Also, if it was generally known that the 'Umayyads were "deeply involved in the opposition" to the Prophet, there was no need at 'Urwah's time to emphasize that the persecution was severe only at two specific periods. The suggestion is also somewhat inconsistent with Watt's earlier use of another report by 'Urwah to trace the beginning of opposition to the Prophet. It may be recalled that on the basis of 'Urwah's statement in that report that some propertied Quraysh people coming from Ṭâ'if started the opposition to the Prophet, Watt suggests that some Quraysh people having special commercial interests in Ṭâ'if started the opposition.[5] Had 'Urwah had any ulterior motive against the 'Umayyads he would have so mani-

1. *Ibid.*
2. *Ibid.*, 214.
3. Watt, *M. at. M.*, 145-146.
4. *Ibid.*, 146.
5. *Supra*, pp. 717-718, 726, 735-736.

pulated his report as to suggest in the first instance that they were responsible for starting the opposition against the Prophet.

With regard to the assassination attempt, however, Watt adopts in effect mainly Muir's views and partly those of Margoliouth. Thus, after relating the Quraysh leaders' secret conference and their decision to kill the Prophet jointly, the representatives of all the clans taking part in the murder, Watt says that though there is no reason for denying that some such meeting took place and that the Quraysh leaders "realized that Muḥammad was planning hostile activities against them", it is clear "from subsequent events" that "there was no resolute attempt to kill" the Prophet and that "there was less agreement at the meeting than the sources assert. The imminence of danger, however, perhaps precipitated Muḥammad's departure."[1]

In saying that "there was less agreement at the meeting than the sources assert" and that nonetheless the "imminence of danger....perthaps precipitated Muḥammad's departure" Watt clearly echoes Muir's views and the same objection apply to this statement as well. Similarly in saying that the Quraysh realized that "Muḥammad was planning hostile activities against them" Watt adopts Muir's view that the conclusion of the Second 'Aqabah Pledge was an "unwarranted interference" in the internal affairs of Makka. It is also a reflection of Margoliouth's view that when "Mohammed's successful diplomacy threatened to wreck the independence of their city", the Quraysh "adopted forcible measures".[2] Also the saying that "subsequent events" show that "there was no resolute attempt to kill Muḥammad" savours of Margoliouth's view that the Quraysh only weakly and unsuccessfully planned to kill the Prophet. If by "subsequent events" it is meant that the Prophet was not in fact killed and he succeeded in escaping, then it is to be noted that as persecution falling short of putting the victim to death is not necessarily mild[3], similarly an assassination attempt is not irresolute simply because the intended victim succeeded in escaping the attempt.

V. ON THE MANNER OF THE PROPHET'S MIGARTION

Regarding the manner of the Prophet's migartion all the three scholars concentrate their attention on the question why the Prophet first allowed his followers to migrate to Madina and he himself delayed going there till

1. *Ibid.*, 150.
2. Margoliouth, *op.cit.*, 183.
3. See *supra*, 750-751.

almost all the Makkan Muslims had reached there. They suggest a number of reasons in reply to this question. Muir says that perhaps the Prophet was waiting to receive "assurance" from Madina that the arrangements for his reception there "were secure" and that his adherents there were both ready and able to "execute their engagement for his defence." He might even have been actuated by "the more generous desire to see all his followers safely away" before he himself left Makka; or he might "even be waiting with the vague surmise that divine retribution ... was about to descend on the unbelieving city."[1] Muir adds that the Quraysh, expecting the Prophet to migrate with his people, "were perplexed" at this "strange procedure".[2]

Echoing Muir's first suggestion in a large measure Margoliouth says that the Prophet delayed his departure for Madina because he intended to test the faith of the people of Madina and to be sure, before leaving his "stronghold", that the Madinites welcomed "those hungry mouths" from Makka. Also, adds Margoliouth, if the people of Madina proved fickle, the refugees "would form a bodyguard of desperate men of whose loyalty" the Prophet "could be absolutely sure."[3] And just as Margoliouth takes one of Muir's suggestions and adds a new one, similarly Watt reiterates Margoliouth's last mentioned suggestion and adds to it a new one. Watt says that the Prophet waited at Makka until the majority of his followers reached Madina "probably to ensure that waverers did not abandon the enterprise" and that he wanted to make it certain "that he would be in a strong and independent position when he reached Madina and would not have to rely solely on the support of the Madinan Muslims."[4] The last part of the statement is in essence the same as Margoliouth's suggestion that in case the Madinites proved fickle, the refugees would form a solid core of bodyguards on whose loyalty the Prophet could rely. Watt cites in support of his statement Leo Caetani's *Annali dell'Islam*, I, 365. It appears that both Margoliouth and Caetani independently made the same suggestion, for their works were published in the same year (1905).

But let us consider the suggestions. As regards the Caetani-Margoliouth-Watt surmise that the Prophet wanted to be sure at least of the support of the

1. Muir, *op.cit.*, 131.
2. *Ibid.*, 132.
3. Margoliouth, *op.cit.*, 206.
4. Watt, *M. at M.*, 150.

"refugees" in case the Madinites proved "fickle", it is simply beside the point and does in no way explain the procedure of the followers' first going to Madina before the Prophet went there; for he could rely on the support on the "refugees" in either case, whether they preceded him or accompanied him to that place. The other surmises, namely, (a) that the Prophet probably wanted to test the faith of the Madinites, or (b) that he wanted to receive assurance that the arrangements for his reception there were "secure", or (c) that he wanted to be sure whether his Madinite adherents were able and ready to "execute their engagement for his defence" or (d) that he wanted to see whether they were willing to feed the "hungry mouths" from Makka — all these do not stand to reason and the facts. All the four surmises are in fact different formulations of the first one, namely, to test the faith of the Madinites. But no real test of that could have been made unless the Prophet himself went there. If the Madinites contemplated bad faith, they would surely have maintained a show of good faith till the Prophet arrived there and then to let him down along with his followers. No earthly prudence and precaution could have prevented their doing so. Secondly, the negotiations with Madina were made over a period of at least two years during which the faith and sincerity of the Madinites had become quite clear to the Prophet. Muṣ'ab ibn 'Umayr stayed with them for about a year to teach the Qur'ân and to preach Islam among their people. Obviously he kept the Prophet well informed of his prospects and the prospects of Islam at Madina. More importantly, after the Second Pledge of 'Aqabah, some Madinite Muslims came over to Makka to coordinate the process of the migration. In view of all these it is simply idle to think that the Prophet still waited to have further proof of the good faith of the Madinites. Thirdly, if it was at all intended to test their sincerity, that could have been done more easily and more sensibly by sending a sizeable group of emigrants there instead of sending almost the whole body of them. Finally, if the Prophet had been actuated by the considerations suggested, he would not have overlooked the fact that the procedure he adopted left him almost alone in the midst of his enemies while there was the further risk of his followers growing lukewarm in their loyalty or even turning against him in case the Madinites were found wanting in their support and cooperation. The surmises made by the orientalists thus do not reasonably explain the procedure adopted by the Prophet.

As regards Muir's surmise that the Prophet might even be waiting to see divine retribution befalling Makka, it is totally unteble. There is no indica-

tion in the sources that the Prophet ever expected that divine retribution was about to befall Makka. Had he been under such an impression he would have rather hastened to leave it, taking his followers with him. Equally untenable is Watt's suggestion that the Prophet probably waited to ensure that waverers did not "abandon the enterprise". There is no instance of the Prophet's prevailing upon any waverer as such to persevere in the so-called "enterprise". Watt's characterization of the migration as "the enterprise" is indeed symptomatic only of his and also Muir's and Margoliouth's view that by the conclusion of the Second Pledge of 'Aqabah and the consequent migration to Madina the Prophet was planning "hostile activities" against the Quraysh. This was of course the view of the Prophet's Quraysh opponents; and hostilities did indeed subsequently break out between the two sides. Truly speaking, those subsequent developments were only a coninuation and escalation by the Quraysh themselves of their earlier hostilities that drove the Prophet and the Muslims from their homes and forced them to seek refuge in another and a considerably distant town. So far as the Second Pledge of 'Aqabah and the migration are concerned, they were to all intents and purposes defensive steps. The Prophet and the Muslims left their hearths and homes for conscience's sake. There was as yet no plan to wage any sort of armed counterattack against the Quraysh oppressors. True, the Madinites, rightly apprehending the hostilities of the already hostile and violent Quraysh, pledged themselves to fight for the defence of the Prophet and Islam. Indeed their giving shelter to the Prophet and the Muslims against the persecution and enmity of the Quraysh in itself meant the undertaking of such a responsibility. The Prophet had not yet received divine permission to take up arms and fight for the cause; nor did he as yet permit his followers to do so. In fact the defensive nature of the migration and the absence of permission to engage in an armed conflict account for what Muir calls the Prophet's "strange" procedure. He did indeed exhibit uncommon generosity in not migrating first and thus leaving his followers behind in the midst of enemies; but he could as well have migrated accompanied by his followers. He did not do so because in that case the Quraysh were sure to come in a body to oppose them, leading inevitably to an armed conflict for which the Prophet had not as yet received divine permission. For the same reason he did not ask or encourage any contingent of Madinan Muslims to come to or near Makka to escort him to their city, although they were willing and ready to do so. For, that procedure would likewise have elicited hostile action by the

Quraysh. Under the circumstances and in accordance with divine instructions he asked his followers to proceed to Madina and himself stayed behind waiting for Allah's specific permission for him to leave and disregarding all the risks it involved. And when he received the instructions for himself to leave, he did so, with full confidence in Divine help amidst all the humanly conceivable risks and hazards, and proceeded unarmed and unaccompanied by any contingent of bodyguards. The so-called "strange procedure" was part of the Divine plan, not the product of what the orientalists surmise determined the Prophet's procedure.

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INDEX

A

B

C

D

E

F

I

K

L

M

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And Allah is the Bestower of guidance.

إنّ وزارة الشؤون الإسلاميّة والأوقاف والدّعوة والإرشاد

في المملكة العربيّة السّعوديّة

المشرفة على مجمّع الملك فهد

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إذ يسرُّها أن يُصدر المُجمّع بالتّعاون مع

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تسأل الله أن ينفع به، وأن يجزي

خادم الحرمين الشّريفين الملك فهد بن عبد العزيز آل سعود

أحسن الجزاء على جهوده العظيمة في نشر كتاب الله الكريم

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